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ANGUS GRAY

VOL. I.



ANGUS GRAY

BY

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'SCARSLIFF ROCKS' 'ANNIE AN EXCELLENT PERSON' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.



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ANGUS GRAY.



CHAPTER I.


THE LIASTON WORLD.

THE inhabitants of the little south-coast town of Liaston had for some months counted amongst their numbers a father and daughter of the name of Eveleigh, who, all unconsciously to themselves, were the objects of much interest, some suspicion, some admiration, and more resentment to the leaders of such society as the place could boast of. The interest and resentment were felt by all. The suspicion was suggested by the mothers of families. The admiration was shared by

leaders of the little world they lived in. Who was responsible for them? Why no introductions? That Mr. Eveleigh was a gentleman was felt to be indisputable. And the girl was very handsome, said the men. But by what right had the friendly advances made to both (for Liaston had at first been friendly) been virtually disdained, the calls returned by cards, the invitations civilly refused, the club unentered by Mr. Eveleigh, and the young people of both sexes snubbed by such a mere child as his daughter, asked the united voices of male and female resentment. At the same time, and in spite of all this, it was generally acknowledged that these Eveleighs did not look like people who were in hiding. There


was a 'distant' look about the father's expression that might be occasioned by short-sight, but which nevertheless strongly suggested pride. And it was certainly neither timidity nor shyness that looked out of the girl's eyes as she dispensed her cold and haughty little bows to the loungers in the High Street in her very occasional progresses through the town. It is possible that Liaston society derived from its mingled feelings towards both upon the whole more pleasure than pain. Everybody felt, if they would not confess it openly, that this little mystery in their midst was a valuable aid to conversation, the art of which was very languishing in Liaston, supported as it chiefly was by respectable ancient officers on half-pay, doubtfully respectable middle-aged officers who had either left the service when they married, or whose country had no longer occasion for their services ; by occa-

of Liaston were of infinitely more importance than any mere outside interests, such as politics, science, art, or literature. Poverty, and the absence of the railway, which did not run nearer than eight or nine miles from Liaston, accounted for this state of things. What spare money the better class possessed was required for etceteras of dress by the ladies ; and for little pleasures, such as horses, billiards, and frequent refreshment, by the men. There was consequently a rigid economy practised in most households in the matter of books, and periodicals were not to be thought of. No magazines, and very few weekly papers, which as a rule were understood in Liaston to be heavy reading, were taken at the club. The members of the club were not



numerous, and the subscriptions were small ; referring more particularly to the requirements of the billiard room than to those of the reading room. A few daily papers were to be seen there, as a matter of course, and a few sporting papers. The elderly officers watched in the daily papers the rise and fall of certain stock with an intense and purely personal interest ; and the younger officers took a melancholy and morbid pleasure in being well posted up in the various manly amusements treated of in the sporting papers, from which they themselves were debarred by the pressure of unkind circumstance. A few amongst them, usually the most elderly, took a languid interest in their country, and pleased themselves with the reflection that it was in a fair way to destruction ; confided to each other sorrowful forebodings respecting the future that would grow out of the present worship of King Mob ; and in-

their chairs closer together, and end their political discussions by a comfortable and prolonged howl over the delinquencies of the Liaston tradesmen, and the uselessness and 'airs' of their own men-servants and maid-servants. Mr. Eveleigh, as has been said, never appeared at this club. It had leaked out through the proprietor of the coach that went daily between Liaston and the nearest railway station, that Mr. Eveleigh spent a fortune in newspapers and magazines. This fact proved satisfactorily to most of the men, that though he lived in a cottage he was not therefore a very poor man. They had no desire to read his papers and magazines, and yet they felt an undefined resentment against him for indulging in a luxury



in which they could have no participation. The energetic spinsters of Liaston had also a grievance against Mr. Eveleigh. He had refused civilly, but decidedly, to join in the box of books sent from town for the general enlightenment; giving as his reason that he had already made arrangements that his daughter should have whatever books she wished for, and whenever she wished for them, from his bookseller. What right had a 'little chit of a girl' like Miss Eveleigh to a box of books all to herself? when the rest of Liaston had to be content with one not very large box amongst them, out of which no one person ever seemed to succeed in getting the special book he or she wanted to read till so long after its arrival that the box was always waiting to be changed, and seldom was changed; thereby causing the few readers in Liaston to be lamentably behindhand in their acquaintance with the current literature of


nation.

It was not probable that Liaston would find the solution to the problem it had set itself. The extreme simplicity of Mr. Eveleigh's motives, and the utter absence of all reason for concealing his past were fatal to the satisfaction of suspicious enquiry. His reticence was caused simply by a desire to do as he would be done by. But it naturally did not occur to the Liastonians that a new-comer and a stranger in their midst might be entirely uninterested in their past and present histories, and be unable to imagine that they themselves could have any interest in his. And doubtless they would have been disappointed to find that he could have stood the severest examination respect-

ing both they could have subjected him to, and have come triumphantly, if unromantically, out of it.

Harold Eveleigh was a gentleman of two or three generations, who had lived in the world in his youth, and might have lived in it still. Seclusion, therefore, was his choice, not the life that circumstances forced him to lead. He was a widower of recent date; and if he privately rejoiced in his freedom it was with the peace of a good conscience in the knowledge that he had been an admirable and self-sacrificing husband. All his married life had been passed in wandering about the world from place to place, and he was a man to whom a restless, unsettled life was extremely distasteful. His wife had been possessed of as strong a dislike to the monotony of a settled life; her will had not been the stronger of these two clashing wills, but her temper had been

temper was calm and not easily roused, and he had more than a fair share of self-respect. But his very calmness had something in it more nearly resembling the good nature of indifference than of absence of passion. The actions of people for whom he cared absolutely nothing had no power to rouse him either to anger or admiration. He knew how much easier it was, and how much less trouble it was to pass by the little follies and stupidities and the faults of others rather than to vex and worry himself over them. And his self-esteem would have suffered at the loss of dignity implied by loss of temper over trifles. Therefore he had invariably yielded to his wife's wishes. Mrs. Eveleigh, moreover, was a clever woman, and had lured him on from place to place by the



bait of looking for a home that should combine everything that each could desire. Such a home was never found. Three months was the longest time Mrs. Eveleigh had ever cared to stay in one place. Seeking rest and finding none she passed from north to south, from east to west, dragging in her train her passive victims. For even the child Ellinor began at last to regard herself and her father in the light of victims to her mother's restlessness, and greatly honoured her father for his apparent unselfishness, and good-tempered acquiescence in a manner of life that she was gradually beginning to understand he very much disliked. Taking after her mother in her own temper Nell was all the more admiring of her father's placidity.

He was, as his servants had said, easy to live with in an eminent degree because of this outside calm. Nevertheless it may be

of much rhyme and some poetry ; but wise men and poets have not recognised as clearly that other bitterness that swells the heart when the eyes once full of passionate love grow calmly critical, when the voice loses the tender and takes on the civil tone, when the belief that everything the loved one does is perfection changes to the conviction that there is much left to be desired in his or her behaviour, when worship becomes good-natured tolerance, and love is turned to liking. Mrs. Eveleigh had nothing to complain of outwardly in her married life. Nevertheless that restless desire that possessed her to rush from place to place seldom or never besets happy people ; and taking all things into consideration, her

passionate temper, her craving for change, her unsettled health, and her husband's placid indifference, we may reasonably infer that she was not a happy woman. Neither could it be asserted that Mr. Eveleigh was a happy man. That he had at one time passionately loved his wife, and that the passion of love was extinguished for ever in his heart with the death of his love for her, is probable from the man's after life and natural character. He had possibly never been beset by, and at least he had never yielded to, the smallest temptation to replace his broken idol by a new one. Instead, through what dark days of gloom and disappointment he himself could only tell, he had set this sort of love away from him as something that he had ventured on and found wanting, and must henceforth have nothing more to do with. He had filled up his life with things instead of

that the love and confidence that existed between them was the compensation offered to him by a relenting fate for the ruin of his other hopes, and to feel that he had more right than other fathers to the whole heart, and to the disposal of the whole life of his only child. So dear a child as she seemed to him ! Bright and beautiful, and full of health and spirit ; companionable and intelligent to no ordinary degree. And to think of bringing her up, developing her intelligence, teaching her to sympathize with all his tastes and fancies till she gradually should become a necessary part of his very existence ; and then having to hand her over to some 'brute' or 'fool' of a man who would in all probability break her heart

and her spirit, and despise or rebel against her intellect! No! fate had required much of him, but Nell was left and Nell he would retain, as much, so he said to himself, for her own sake as for his. Other parents guarded their children carefully from physical disease; he would guard his child from mental disease. Why should she take the fatal complaint of love any more than any other complaint if he guarded her from it? Gradually as this feeling grew stronger it led to the formation of some very distinct plans for her education, and to the determination to seclude her from all acquaintances that brought him to seek for such a place as Liaston and settle there in so quiet a manner, as should attract no attention whatever from the few visitable people such a world-forgotten little place might count amongst its inhabitants. Nell should know nobody; should be taught to seek for

taught that marriage with any one of them would be beneath her. Thus her youth he hoped would pass not unhappily, and with it the danger of loss to himself. To do him justice he entirely disbelieved in happiness in married life; he did consider the youths of the present day beneath his daughter's notice; and he also recognised the possibility of the failure of his plans, and had no positive intention of putting himself between Nell and what she might consider her happiness.

CHAPTER II.

BENEATH CONTEMPT.

It was in pursuance of his object that Mr. Eveleigh would sometimes walk through Liaston with Nell, deliberately calling her attention to the men who lounged at the doors of the club-house or on the steps of the principal hotel, yawning, and bored, and faintly hoping that the coach would come in soon; and would bestow a few passing remarks of contempt upon them.

‘Shall I cast in my lot with them and become one of them? Would you like to come down some morning, and see me standing there whiling away the “slow, sad hours” with a pipe, and a wonder whether

think we shall ever come to that pass, you and I, dear?' he asked her one day, as he caught the very faintest curl of disdain on her lips as she gravely bent her head in answer to the salutation of a strong, stalwart, young fellow who had been leaning languidly against the door-posts smoking, and who hastily extracted his cigar as he drew himself erect and took off his hat, while a look of interest and curiosity suddenly brightened his heavy features as the Eveleighs passed him. Instead of immediately answering her father Nell only smiled slightly, as if the question were too absurdly ridiculous to require any answer. But presently she startled him a little by remarking gravely that she had been thinking about these

'poor men,' and had come to the conclusion that they were not so much to be blamed.

'You see, papa, if they have no intelligence in them, how can it come out?' she asked so seriously as to miss the contemptuous nature of her question, nor did she notice her father's smile of relief.

'But I sometimes think, papa, that these sad results all come from the unnatural conditions of society, from foolish class prejudices, and from some great mistake in the way in which people educate their children,' she added, giving her mind to the subject with the gravity and the earnestness of her extreme youth, and rather taking Mr. Eveleigh's breath away. 'Don't you think I am right, papa?' she asked anxiously, with a little pucker between her eyebrows, turning her serious eyes on him.

'My dear child, I don't quite follow you,' he said, with rather an uneasy laugh.

know what to do with his life ?’

‘I mean that he is in all probability not an idiot—he looks strong and healthy,’ Nell answered. ‘Surely,’ she added, after a pause, with some diffidence, ‘it does not follow that because he is not intellectual he might not be a very useful member of the community if the present conditions of society had not forced his parents to try to make him work with his head instead of with his hands.’

‘You forget, little Nell, that Mr. Chudleigh is a gentleman, and tradition forbids that he should become a shoemaker,’ Mr. Eveleigh remarked with perfect gravity.

‘A gentleman! a shoemaker! you will will be so stupid, father dear! A big, strong

man like that a shoemaker! I meant of course some manly occupation; though I do not mean to despise shoemakers. I would rather be an honest hard-working cobbler than a useless fine gentleman. A gentleman! papa! as if that mattered in comparison to being a man, *a real man!*'

And Miss Eveleigh flushed all over her proud young face, and cast a glance of fiery indignation out of her eyes at her father.

'My dear child, you are talking nonsense as usual!' said Mr. Eveleigh, returning her glance with one of dismay. 'I must look over the papers and periodicals we take in, I see. Or perhaps you have been reading Burns for the first time, or——'

'At all events I do not forget that the world contains other people besides Mr. and Miss Eveleigh!' Nell retorted with much apparent irrelevancy, but following

‘Do you mean to reproach me, child? Is it that you find our life together dull? Do you want to know these people? Would you like to talk to this Mr. Chudleigh and give him some advice respecting his wasted strength of body, and expose your views with regard to his parents’ folly in having taken for granted that he had a mind, and in recollecting that he was born a gentleman?’

Nell laughed, and recovered her temper in a moment. She took her father’s arm and patted it with her other hand with a pretty caressing gesture.

‘I am never dull, dear. I don’t want to know anybody, least of all Mr. Chudleigh. He is only my example, you know—and a

very sad one, dear, a very sad one!’ repeated the girl with a slight shake of her young head.

‘Don’t waste your pity on him, child,’ her father answered a little impatiently, ‘a lazy, idle, young fool, beneath contempt; but quite contented with his position, and crediting himself with sense and talent, doubtless, to any extent! Let us go round by the sea,’ he added, hastily turning out of the High Street, and taking a seaward direction, anxious to get out of sight of the indolent Liastonians, and to drive from his mind a dawning doubt as to the wisdom of the course of education to which he was subjecting Nell. Their way led them through the fishermen’s quarter, and Nell looked about her with interest and curiosity. Mr. Eveleigh soon forgot his passing annoyance in his delight in the many little picturesque

élite. Odd archways unexpectedly led the way to courts surrounded by low buildings, patched and mended, and in some parts modernized, but not sufficiently so as to make them either comfortable or ugly. Here and there a pretty, old, gabled house would jut out into the street. An old door that had proved its strength, would redeem the commonplace of the windows above it; steep steps would lead up suddenly in a thick stone wall to some dark and mysterious dwelling-place—a narrow street, dark with the gloom of the too close contact of its houses would end in a little bridge with ivy clustering round its diminutive parapets, and blazing with sunshine that came from no perceptible opening, till as you came close up to it you

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discovered that the bridge was over a stream which lay far below it, and which turned abruptly at the end of the street, taking a straight course to the sea, and letting the light in sideways. This stream was a feature in the town, and meandered through it in a very irregular way; dirty and muddy at times, and not very sweet, but always picturesque, and more especially so when a rock or two intercepted its course, and caused some splashing and sparkling of its waters in their eager desire, not much to be wondered at, to rush to purify themselves in the sea. The bridges over it were many of them of wood, most of them more or less unsafe, and most of them damp with mossy growths and lichens and ferns growing out of their sides.

It was a lovely summer morning as Mr. Eveleigh and Nell wandered slowly through these by-ways to the sea. Strewn about the doors, hanging out of the windows, cumber-

...
old oars, bits of old boats for firewood ;
baskets full of fish, and empty baskets bright
with shining fish scales ; brown and red sails
in various stages of decomposition or repair ;
spare ropes, old ropes, black and rusty ;
everywhere were patches of colour dear to
Mr. Eveleigh's eyes. And mingling with all
this were the men, women, and children, with
their bright, clear cut, not very English faces,
dark, handsome eyes, and reddish-brown
hair ; a few of them stopping their various
employments for a moment as the father and
daughter passed to give no more than a
quick glance of enquiry instead of the rude
stolid stare of the inland rustic ; the greater
number taking no sort of heed, admiring or
curious, of the strangers in their midst. Nell

and her father had many times speculated on the un-English type of the fishing population of Liaston and of some of the more obscure villages on that coast. Mr. Eveleigh had a theory of his own to account for the prevalence of the dark eyes and reddish hair. He imagined it to have been at some very distant period an accidental distinction of some one large and very handsome family in one of the old villages, transmitted from generation to generation by intermarriage. This particular village might, it seemed to him, have thus become remarkable in these parts for the beauty of its people, and the young fishers of that coast might have frequently chosen their brides out of it, and thus the peculiar type might have been passed on beyond the village where it first sprang up. Nell had another theory, more romantic, and very dear to her heart. All that coast had been in old days infested by foreign smug-

many wonderful transactions. Nell had delighted herself with the old fishermen's stories, and had made many romances of her own out of them. It pleased her to think that the dark eyes, and red brown hair, and the intelligence of the people came from the mingling of the warm blood of the lively bright-faced Gascons from the Garonne with the paler colder blood of the people of the English coast. The spirit and the daring which looked out of the dark eyes might be, she thought, a survival of the wild, reckless lawlessness, and the high courage of some long-forgotten hero of those exciting days, when the life in the English sea-coast village was not the sleepy stagnant thing it had now sunk to. Possibly Mr. Eveleigh's theory

was a better one than Nell's, but she would not admit it for a moment, and her father amused himself with teasing her by mocking it.

‘Look, Nell, look!’ he said, stopping suddenly by one of the old archways before mentioned through which a gleam of sunshine from the court beyond streamed sideways on the figure of a man leaning up against the old stones placidly smoking his pipe, ‘another of your survivals! Gascon or Spaniard, eh, Nell? What a splendid fellow! Look at the light on his beard!’ and Mr. Eveleigh stood still and openly admired the man's broad strong figure in its attitude of indolent ease; making notes of the big boots, the red cap, the rough, blue jersey which displayed so well the full throat, and of the well-set head with its regular bronzed features, keen black eyes, and reddish beard which the slanting ray of the sun-

then looked beyond the Eveleighs down the street.

‘Whatever he is, he is better-mannered than we are, papa!’ said Nell, giving her father a little pull onwards. ‘You stare at the man as if he were made of stone! and why do you admire him? He is doing just what that poor Mr. Chudleigh was doing whom you despised so much, “whiling away the slow, sad hours with a pipe,”’ she added, casting the same look of contempt on the handsome fisherman she had bestowed on the handsome idle gentleman in the High Street.

‘Resting after a hard night’s work most likely,’ said Mr. Eveleigh, turning his head as they passed on for a lingering look at the

man. 'There is no possible comparison to be made between the two men, and so picturesque ! such a study !'

Nell laughed.

'If that is all, papa, Mr. Chudleigh would look just as well in big boots and a jersey ! How do you know but that he also spent his night in the deepest and most abstruse study, and is not also taking his natural rest in the sunshine ?' she persisted.

'Study ! Have you looked at his face, child ?' answered her father impatiently. 'Why, that fisherman there has twice the natural ability and energy of that fool Chudleigh ; anybody can see that at a glance !'

'Then, papa, *you* despise Mr. Chudleigh because he is stupid ? *I* don't,' said Nell with emphasis, not noticing the quick look Mr. Eveleigh bestowed on her ; 'But I do despise him'—Mr. Eveleigh sighed with relief ; 'because,' continued Nell, 'he is

significant life ; because, because . . .

‘ Because he belongs to his generation, and is a poor specimen of a man, Nell, like all the young men you and I have had the misfortune to come across,’ interrupted her father ; ‘ he is not worthy even of your contempt, child ; let him be ! ’

‘ I don’t like your fisherman any better, papa. He is just as idle, and he is just as big and strong, and yet you don’t despise him, though I am sure he knows as little about anything you care for, less I’m sure, than Mr. Chudleigh ! ’ persisted Nell.

Mr. Eveleigh was vexed.

‘ I don’t despise him because—’ he hesitated, for how could he say that by no possibility could a man of that class disturb the

plan of his life, whereas the Mr. Chudleighs of the world of Liaston were possible rocks ahead. 'Because,' he began again, 'an uneducated man has not the same responsibilities as a gentleman . . .'

'Even when he has "twice the natural ability and energy, as anybody can see at a glance,"' said Nell, laughing at her father's perplexity. 'Better tell the truth, papa, and say that the fisherman pleases your dear colour-loving eyes, and the gentleman does not! Here we are at the sea!'

Mr. Eveleigh had taught Nell effectually to be contemptuous, but scarcely from satisfactory reasons, he began to think. He wisely dropped the subject for the present.

CHAPTER III.

A MODEL.

THEY sat down on some old logs of wood in a solitary corner of the curious little pier, and for a few minutes neither of them spoke. Nell looked over the sea, and thought of the contradictions in her father's prejudices. Mr. Eveleigh watched for a moment the wondering look in her young eyes, which brought to her face a childish innocent expression, very sweet and comforting to him ; reminding him as it did of her extreme youth, and helping him to forget that, in spite of it, she had a mind and a will of her own. Presently he stood up, and looked

up and down the pier, and scanned the boats in the little harbour with a look of eager interest.

‘Where can he be?’ he said at last aloud, looking about vainly for some human being he seemed to be expecting.

‘Who, papa?’ asked Nell, roused by his voice from her reverie, and following her father’s restless glances hither and thither.

Mr. Eveleigh sat down again and took a sketch-book from his pocket, and opening it pointed out to Nell a slight drawing of a man in very rough sailor’s clothes clinging round a broken mast.

‘I don’t know him,’ said Nell, contemplating it intently and searching her memory for a figure to remind her of the subject of the sketch. ‘And you haven’t put his face in either; how can I know who it is!’ she said, colouring a little with vexation at not being able to recognise it at once.

paint it as I see it,' he murmured, and sighed doubtingly. Nell looked at him, and then again at the sketch.

"Oh, papa! Yes, I see now—" "The last to leave!" A bit of a wreck and a terrible storm, and he is clinging to the broken mast, and a gleam of lightning or moonlight, or a break in a cloud lights up his face and shows the despair in his eyes that are gazing after the last boatful in which there was no room for him!"

'Not despair, Nell!' interrupted Mr. Eveleigh, looking pleased at her quick interpretation of his idea. 'Not despair in his eyes! You must see this fellow, and then you will understand how the idea came to me. A splendid face, full of the calmest courage, belonging to a man who could face

death bravely and thankfully if by his own sacrifice others were saved.'

'Or *one* other, perhaps,' supplemented Nell *sotto voce*, thinking of the picture.

'And yet the fellow was doing nothing more heroic than fastening his sail round the mast last night when I was down here after dark!' laughed Mr. Eveleigh. 'The moon was high, and he glanced up at it for a moment as he tied the sail, and then the idea came to me.'

'He might not look the same by daylight,' suggested Nell. 'Can't you remember his face as it was then enough to put it in?'

'No; and it is just by daylight that I want to see him. I dare say you are right, and he will not look the same! A common coast-guard who had been out late fishing!' and a vexed look of doubt came into Mr. Eveleigh's eyes as he again stood

The sail was apparently of some weight, but he stepped freely and easily with the firm and measured tread that is the result of good drill. Mr. Eveleigh watched him eagerly, and his face lighted up as the man came nearer and nearer to them.

‘The *same* face, Nell, I feel sure, even by daylight!’ he said. ‘Can you see now what I meant? No! Come down with me while I speak to him then. I should like to hear what you think of him for the picture.’

Nell rose readily, as eager as her father to see this model of his imaginary hero, but with a misgiving that she strove to thrust away about the picture. ‘If he could paint it as he sees it!’ she caught herself repeat-

ing to herself doubtfully. When they reached the stairs of the pier under which the boats were moored the coast-guard was already in his boat, and was fixing the sail.

‘I am afraid he is going out again to fish, and he may be out hours! how provoking!’ exclaimed Mr. Eveleigh; and losing instantly all feeling towards his model but the one feeling of being his superior, and so, in some sense, his master, he called to him hastily, ‘Stop a moment, my good fellow, and draw in—I want to speak to you.’

The man desisted from his occupation, drew himself erect in his boat, and looked enquiringly at his interlocutor. Recognising his superior, as Mr. Eveleigh had recognised his inferior, he put his hand to his cap, and drew his boat up close to the steps by the chain attaching it to the pier.

but feeling it rather awkward to tell the possessor of it what he wanted with it. Changing his tone a little as he looked, he changed also the form of his speech.

‘Had you many fish last night? I saw you come in. Do you sell them?’

‘No, sir,’ replied the man, by no means offended. ‘Belong to the coast-guard, sir,’ he added explanatorily.

‘Of course, my good fellow, of course I can see that. You didn’t suppose I took you for one of the fishermen! Only I thought—only I wanted——’ here Mr. Eveleigh paused a moment to consider how to put it, and Nell interposed.

‘Is it amusing, sea-fishing?’ she asked of the amateur fisherman.

‘That’s a matter of taste, miss. I like it myself ; and my mates, they like the fish !’ he said with a pleasant smile.

‘It is such a fine morning, papa,’ said Nell to her father, in a half whisper, ‘and it would be such a good chance. If you would ask him to take us, I could speak to him, and you could draw him ! Do ask him, papa !’ she entreated with ready tact, solving Mr. Eveleigh’s difficulty at once.

‘To be sure !’ he said, ‘to be sure ! the very thing. I say, my man, would it be against orders to take us out with you this morning ; my daughter and I are fond of the water, and it seems to me your boat would hold us. My daughter has a fancy to try to sink a line.’

For a moment the man hesitated, colouring slowly. He was off duty, and this solitary fishing was a recreation he indulged in so often to the exclusion of more stirring

whenever they chose to go. Although they had never to their knowledge seen him individually till this moment, or rather as far as Mr. Eveleigh was concerned, till last night, he had seen them repeatedly, knew all about them, where they lived, and who they were, and how speculative Liaston in general was respecting them. He had taken very little interest in them himself, but his mother, who lived with him, was by no means indifferent to the gossip of the town, and often, only to please her, he had affected to wonder about the Eveleighs. He had been stationed about a year at Liaston, and was not inexperienced in the encroaching demands of both inhabitants and visitors for

the occasional services of coast-guards off duty. Nell noticed his hesitation.

‘I should so much like to go, just this once,’ she said, beseechingly where she might have commanded, and so winningly that resistance was hopeless.

‘As to holding you, the boat’s equal to that, sir ; step in, sir, and welcome. One moment, miss, while I close her up ; now then,’ and he steadied the boat while Nell sprang into it lightly, but did not attempt to help her, though he unceremoniously seized Mr. Eveleigh’s arm, and half pulled him in, taking for granted that a landsman by no means young required assistance. Mr. Eveleigh laughed, and good-naturedly suffered the helpful tug.

‘Though I’m equal to a longer leap than that yet, eh, Nell ?’ he said softly to her, as they settled themselves as comfortably as

CHAPTER IV.

ONLY FOR A PICTURE.

PAINTING was the last of the many hobbies Mr. Eveleigh had indulged in. He had gone into it with his usual determination to master whatever subject he took up, and was still educating himself vigorously, and working at the same time steadily enough, if without much good result. He had the appreciative much more than the creative faculty, but of this he had not yet convinced himself. When once he should have done so, his artistic fury would subside completely, as so many other fancies had done, and another hobby take its place. Nell was beginning to understand that this would be the inevitable ending of all her father's varied

father. It would have been better for Mr. Eveleigh if he had had a happy blindness where his own efforts were concerned. If, for instance, he could have persuaded himself that he was a great painter, dating from the time of his coming to Liaston, and in that deep interest could have gradually lost sight of his projects for Nell. Unhappily he was already beginning to doubt, as he had so many times before doubted, of his own capacity. He would stand before his sketches and think to himself with satisfaction that they gave evidence of talent, that they possessed a certain power, some measure of originality; and selecting one that specially pleased him, he would try to make a picture of it. And gradually as he worked at

it a consciousness of incapacity would creep over him. With a chill sense of discouragement he would note the vexed disappointment in Nell's eyes as she watched the progress of the work, striving loyally to admire, and assuring him all the time that it was 'very nice!' and then he would smile, not without a shade of bitterness, and contemplate his work more critically, and acknowledge to himself that it was only, as Nell put it, 'very nice!' In the beginning of his hobby he had not minded his failures so much. But now the frequent repetitions of them warned him that the real bent of his genius was as yet undeveloped, if he had any genius at all. One day that he was watching the rising tide with Nell, watching, as idle people who live by the sea learn to watch with a never-ending interest, the ever-changing details of the changeless whole, the leaping water seemed like a living thing in its repeated

seriously, when it turned.

She looked at him compassionately, and altogether seriously, and laying her hand on his, she said gently and hesitatingly, ' Even the wish to do great things, father dear, is beautiful ! '

For the moment he was so surprised to find that Nell had judged him and found him wanting, that he made no reply to her pretty truthfulness. He was not quite sure upon reflection that he liked it. A critic at the hearth is by no means an unmitigated blessing, and plain speaking is not generally conducive to domestic happiness. Mr. Eveleigh did not smile, and he did not caress Nell's hand as it lay affectionately on his ; instead, he took an early opportunity of moving his

own from beneath it. As he did so Nell again glanced at him, and learned her lesson from his face. She loved him so entirely that she could easily read its expressions. She had thought he was seeking for sympathy when he had only made a self-depreciatory remark hoping to be contradicted, and she had given the sympathy without due consideration. She was too truthful now to contradict herself by making another pretty speech to explain this one away; but in future she would keep her criticisms to herself, and say the utmost that could possibly be said in praise of her father's efforts after success in his various pursuits. To herself the girl said that he failed by reason of want of purpose and determination to succeed, but she was wrong. He judged himself more accurately.

‘Was I right, my child?’ he whispered now to her, as, a good deal to the coast-

reply. She was not alarmed, or doubtful of her father's skill ; she was not afraid of being ill ; she did not in the least care for sinking a line and patiently holding the other end till she felt a tug at it ; but she did not see her way to talking to the model unless he sat where her father was sitting, or of any prospect of a good sketch being made unless Mr. Eveleigh left the management of the boat entirely to the man. Mr. Eveleigh accordingly shifted his position, and called to his model that his daughter was nervous and would prefer that he did not interfere at all with the boat. Thinking in all probability that it was just as well that Mr. Eveleigh should not interfere, the coast-guard quietly took his place near Nell.

‘There is no danger, miss,’ he said, with a little contempt in his smile, but compassionating her youth and ignorance.

Nell laughed, noticing the compassion, but did not reply to the comforting assurance. There was a breeze, and some movement of the water, but only enough to make a sail enjoyable to both father and daughter, and not enough movement to hinder Mr. Eveleigh from making his sketch. And yet he did not begin. He had an uncomfortable sort of feeling that he must ask the man’s leave, and that he would not like to do so; and to begin without being noticed was hopeless. Nell, who had promised to keep the man in talk and so divert his attention, was perfectly silent, and the man himself after his one compassionate remark which received no reply did not seem to think another was called for. Neither did the silence seem in

suddenly, speaking loud and in an unconsciously severe tone, and looking at Nell while he addressed the coast-guard. Nell started, and smothered a laugh, but leant forward at once and repeated her father's question.

‘Yes, what do you fish for?’

‘Mackerel, bass, conger,’ replied the man, laconically. And then again there was a silence. Mr. Eveleigh watched till he caught Nell's eye, and gave her another reproachful look, and took out his sketch-book, but did not open it. What on earth she was to say to this imaginary hero, so as to bring out some heroic expression on the grave face, was the difficulty that tied Nell's tongue. She was not in the least shy or nervous, but was at her wit's end how to

launch out suddenly into grandiloquence. Mr. Eveleigh, who knew better, and wanted only variety of expression, was vexed with her, not guessing at the child's difficulty. Suddenly a gleam of mild excitement came into the coast-guard's eyes.

‘ Ah ! there they go. I thought as much ! Do you see them, miss ? the porpoise chasing the mackerel,’ and he pointed out before them to Nell the rolling black bodies tumbling about in and out of the water in their haste to come up with the shoal that was flying before them,

‘ Oh, where ? ’ exclaimed Nell, delighted, and forgetting all serious intention. ‘ I never saw one close to. Couldn't we come up with them ? ’

‘ Here you are, miss. Here's one lag-last alongside. They seem gamesome kind of creatures, don't they, miss ? ’ said the man,

you know there are mackerel ?' asked Nell.

'They're there sure enough, miss,' replied the man vaguely ; 'and for cruel, I'm not so sure that it's so cruel to want their meals, after all. Things in the sea, by which I suppose, miss, that you mean, the like of the creatures here, must live, I'm thinking, as well as things on the land.'

'Things on the land, people and animals, live and *let live*. And most animals—all animals, I think—have more or less feeling. Oh ! I hate sea things ! Did you never watch their heads in aquariums ? Such horrible brutal faces, if you can call them faces ! I think if I were to want a model for the very lowest and coarsest type of human being, I should draw a man's body

with a cod's head! Cod are quite the most ruffianly, low, brutal, glazed-eyed creatures I have ever seen!

The coast-guard laughed. 'Well, miss, I can't say that I've ever thought about a cod's expression. To be sure, I mostly see them with a hook in their gills, and under the circumstances their expression wouldn't naturally be best pleased, neither, no more than you've seen 'em in aquariums! But as for low human nature, miss, you've no occasion to seek for examples of that in the sea! There's a many samples of that on the land; though,' he added, giving a side glance at Nell, 'it's more nor likely that you've never come across 'em, miss. And you'll think the worse of the cod for that reason, may be!'

'I shall always think badly of cod, at all events,' said Nell laughing; 'and I have certainly seen nothing half so low as a cod

severely, with an intention of warning him to mind what he was saying. But the man did not see his glance, though he stopped of his own accord, and turning fully towards Nell, his grave face softened strangely, and he altered his sentence with scarcely a perceptible pause, with as much tact as Mr. Eveleigh himself could have shown; 'as for that,' he said, 'the people here are not a bad sort of people, and not bad to look at, neither. You're in the right there, miss!'

'*Very good* to look at!' said Nell promptly. 'Do you belong to Liaston?' she asked in almost the same breath. Mr. Eveleigh smiled to himself, and Nell instantly saw the inference and coloured a

little. But the coast-guard, if he also saw it, appeared not to do so, though Mr. Eveleigh fancied the bronzed skin took a deeper tone on it for a moment.

‘No, not to Liaston,’ he answered directly, volunteering no information respecting himself, much to Mr. Eveleigh’s astonishment, and of course preventing further questioning. But the porpoise had broken the ice, and loosed Nell’s tongue. Seeing Mr. Eveleigh hold up his book and begin to draw she concluded that commonplace conversation was all he wanted, and it was easy enough to make that while they tacked up and down the bay. For the coast-guard had magnanimously given up the mackerel when he saw how much Nell enjoyed the cruising about, and how little really nervous she was.

‘Perhaps, miss,’ he had said, ‘as you don’t like the porpoise to chase the mackerel

for the other men's dinner, perhaps? And I should be sorry if they had no dinner—and you too!' she added timidly.

'We shan't starve, miss. It would be poor sort of feeding my mates would get if they trusted to me for it. As often as not I get nothing for them; as often as not I never try,' and he laughed softly to himself. And so Nell gave herself up contentedly to enjoying herself without much compunction, giving furtive glances at her father's book and trying vainly to see how he was getting on. The coast-guard, if he saw what Mr. Eveleigh was doing, took no notice for some time. But at one moment when Mr. Eveleigh was indulging in a long look at him he turned suddenly and met

the look, with rather an angry light in his eyes. The faintest tinge of colour came into Mr. Eveleigh's cheeks. He looked down at his half-closed sketch-book for a moment, and then handed it open to the man.

‘I ought to have asked you first if you had any objection,’ he said frankly.

‘Oh, let me look!’ said Nell eagerly, and she leant towards the model as he contemplated Mr. Eveleigh's attempt with much interest and a rather red face, and looked at it also. It was like, but not like, and Nell felt that it was only what she had expected.

‘It is not what I could wish,’ said Mr. Eveleigh, vexed with himself, and still more vexed with Nell's truthful but uncomplimentary silence. ‘I have not had a fair chance. I—I—I should be extremely obliged to you if you would allow me to

spare?' he went on as the colour deepened in his model's face.

'It is for a picture,' interposed Nell; 'it would please my father so much, and me too,' she added.

'I'm sure, sir, I ought to be proud. If I can be of service to you, I'm at your orders, sir,' the coast-guard answered civilly; but he did not look very proud or very willing to be ordered. He kept his eyes on the sketch.

'That will never do as it is. It is bad,' said Mr. Eveleigh, condemning himself with no very pleased countenance, and holding out his hand for the book, with rather an imperious 'give it me!'

‘I wouldn’t say it was bad, sir,’ said the man, ‘though I’m no judge. I’d have liked to have shown it to my old mother! Mother *would* be proud!’ he said half to himself, all trace of the semi-offence and uncomfortable self-consciousness passing away from his face, and a tender smile lighting it up as he gave another glance at the sketch, before he handed it back to Mr. Eveleigh.

‘Then you will not object to allowing me to finish it at my greater convenience?’ asked Mr. Eveleigh, with a certain accent of command in his voice.

‘No, sir, certainly. Whenever you like, sir,’ responded the man more readily, succumbing by force of habit to the orders of a superior, rather than yielding to what seemed to him a strange sort of request. ‘For a picture!’ what could he want with

CHAPTER V.

NELL'S OPINION.

AMONGST the men who spend their days and nights in watching our coasts, there are no decayed gentlemen; therefore, it is to be supposed that when Mr. Eveleigh, in commenting on his model on his way home, told his daughter that the man had 'the ways of a gentleman,' he used a figure of speech, and did not precisely mean the manner of a gentleman. And perhaps when he added, that his model 'was a very superior sort of man,' he more exactly expressed his own feeling of semi-respect and semi-contempt for a being good of his kind, and yet belonging to a lower and different order of creation

firmation of her theories. 'A real man,' if only a coast-guard, whose face forbade the possibility of attributing to him a low or mean thought, full of intelligence, and of 'the calmest courage,' could not fail to be an interesting study.

Her father's frequent animadversions against the men of her own class, had excited in her eager and enquiring mind a desire to find out the causes of the degeneracy of the age, and had given her a bias towards all that is most opposed to elegant idleness and effeminacy. She had made out from promiscuous readings of a variety of periodicals, and occasional fits of industry in following conscientiously contemporary history, that more than one half of

the world had a more or less well-defined grudge against the other half. And with a feeling born partly of her generous large-heartedness, and partly of a youthful enthusiasm, that looked forward to a universal setting to rights of the world's, to her, very patent wrongs, she ranged herself on the side of the grudgers ; and with a spirit of opposition that belonged as much to her desire to amuse her father, and keep up some topics of conversation, as to the belief of youth in the wrongness of any present state of things, she inveighed against the spirit of class legislation that had characterised all conservative rule till she talked herself into believing herself to be the champion of the oppressed people, or, as her father laughingly called her 'a "people's organ,"' a supporter of 'the men of worth all over the earth' who earn their daily bread by the sweat of an honest brow ; by no means realising that

brains for education and the higher professions, and putting the large proportion of the men without brains to dig and delve, and reap and plough, or to any honest trade, irrespective of the accident of birth, that she had found a solution of all 'the people's difficulties. Her theories amused Mr. Everleigh, and it did not occur to him that she attached any serious meaning to them. Looking down on the people with as calm an indifference as he was trying to teach Nell to look down on her equals, he missed the appreciation of the fact of the differences in his own and in his daughter's stand-points. That a young, generous, and enthusiastic girl, with plenty of sense and rather more mind than most girls could be easily taught his own calm, kind

good-natured, but thorough disdain of her fellow-creatures, was not in the nature of things. And Mr. Eveleigh, occupied with himself and his quiet interests, and his determination to secure the happiness of his future life, missed also the sense of the differences in his own and in his daughter's characters. Her interest in people was stronger than his interest in things. All active practical life had stronger charms for her than the dreamy dilettantism in which he delighted, and she had not much of his intense self-love and inclination to self-pleasing. No pursuit that began and ended with the person who followed it, did no good to anyone else either directly or indirectly, and was not even followed for the sake of duty, recommended itself much to Nell Eveleigh. Her father's harmless but apparently aimless, and obviously selfish life seemed to her very inferior to the active energetic life of the coast-guard

risons ; and perhaps, or even if she had had all Liaston to help her to more moderate views, the result would have remained the same. For amongst all the fairly worthy, ignobly contented, and perfectly idle fathers and sons who daily went through the little and innocent routine of their useless little lives in the town, there was, it may be almost taken for granted, no single or collective example of a life worth living. Nell had thoroughly imbibed her father's sentiments respecting them. She had no desire to extend her acquaintance with such commonplace, uninteresting people, and never grumbled aloud or in her heart at the solitariness of her own and her father's life amongst them. But the inevitable consequence of her

want of human interest in people of her own class, made her glad to find it in another class. To this her father made no sort of objection, never for a moment imagining that his daughter could seriously entertain the notion she pretended to hold for the sake, as he supposed, of amusing him, that the women of the people were just as good as herself; nor that she might really believe that there were men amongst them, who but for the accidents of birth and education, were quite his own equals. Nor did he see that by perpetually turning her attention to the special faults of her own class, he might lead her to exaggerate the opposite virtues in the working classes. In fact, he encouraged her to compare them, and was used to laugh at the absurd distinctions she made amongst them. For Miss Eveleigh had an undefined and inherited repulsion to the class of people usually understood by the term 'shopkeepers,'

ranks of 'the people.' Nevertheless, whenever she was feeling most strongly the wrongs of her fellow-creatures, she always thought only with real interest of the picturesque classes—of farmers and farm labourers and herdsman, real tillers of the soil and tenders of cattle, rather than of bakers and corndealers, of butchers and dairymen; of fishermen rather than of fishmongers, and so on. It must be remembered that up to this point in her life all Nell's experience of the people was derived from books and papers and imagination. The latter had been fed since she had come to Liaston by the fine type of those she was daily in the habit of observing, and by frequent conversations with a highly intelligent if imperfectly-edu-

cated old farmer who lived in the valley before described, and who delighted in encouraging her visits to his farm. 'I likes to see you, missie,' he would say, 'because you can talk a bit of sense,' meaning probably, that she was a good listener while he talked his own 'bit of sense' and exposed his views on agriculture, and rates, and game, and a hundred other things, and taught her the arguments she used again, as she considered very effectively, in talking to her father against the interests of the landlords and the parsons. The great charm to her in this old man's society was that he always appeared to her to say what he thought, a thing that she never felt quite sure that her father did; while the old man's remarks were as shrewd and many times more original than Mr. Eveleigh's; and, unless his personal spite was aroused, when his conversation had scarcely the repose of her

certainly a favourable specimen. Nell Eveleigh at seventeen thought a good deal of her own powers of discrimination, had a horror of commonplace, a romantic, but possibly not entirely foolish, belief in the innate nobility of human nature; she was losing her childish thoroughness of confidence in her father's opinions, and forming her own irrespective of his; and she was of a nature to have very decided opinions of her own, and to feel, while she held them, no doubt as to their value. Her very decided opinion at the present time was, that 'class prejudice' was at the root of all evil. To this opinion she was expanding her youthful and enthusiastic mind to add another, destined to become quite as decided, and that was,

that if she were any judge of the character a face typified, Angus Gray, the coast-guard, would be more than equal to the occasion if chance should ever place him in reality in the situation Mr. Eveleigh had in imagination placed him in, his yet unpainted picture.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAIRD'S GREAT-GRANDSON.

THE situation of the cottage in which the Eveleighs had settled themselves was its chief attraction to them. It stood alone on the heights to the right of the town. On the right of the cottage the near cliffs stretched backwards to a lovely valley, or rather landslip, one of the many to be found on the south-western coast of England. The sea lay in front, and to the left the town and the cliffs beyond it. A diminutive verandah surrounded the lower story, and steep steps from the road led directly into the garden which, as well as the cottage, was raised above the road. The nature of the

ground had rendered this necessary and helped towards the perfection of the view from the cottage, not a sign of the lane being visible either from the windows or from the garden. This lane diverged into a road to the town little used on account of its steep descent. The lane itself was a short cut to the landslip, but few vehicles above the dignity of a donkey chair cared to encounter its roughness, and the few passers-by were principally tourists bound for the village of Culve beyond the landslip, and ignorant of the pleasanter and shorter path by the fields. They were few in number and only seen in summer. This secluded situation was trying to the curiosity of the Liastonians ; but by dint of patient and discreet enquiry of the tradesmen and the servants, they had elicited a few facts respecting the father and daughter. Mr. Eveleigh they discovered was 'a very

was if possible a greater reader than he; she neither played nor sang nor drew; and she had a temper and liked her own way. They lived simply, it was discovered, but with a greater degree of elegance than was customary in Liaston; they took long walks together and separately, and that was about all that there was to say about them, and certainly these few facts were of a disappointing nature. They pointed to a simple and unmysterious way of living, an innocent taste for natural beauty, and a feeling for art not positively reprehensible in the eyes of Liaston; for since Mr. Eveleigh did not, as far as they knew, sell his pictures, he was presumably an amateur, and possibly a very inferior artist.

As for the account of Miss Eveleigh it was a commonplace one enough. A pretty girl, made much of by her father, with a temper and a will of her own, was not quite an unknown quantity in Liaston. But the ladies of the place were very much afraid she was 'masculine,' seeing that she read so much, and had no accomplishments, and took long walks occasionally alone! These were points against her; and her proud and disdainful beauty had a certain boldness about it, they also feared. It was much to be wished that her father had some woman friend who could represent to him that this unusual and solitary upbringing was very undesirable for a young girl. Her youth was a point in Nell's favour that no one had the effrontery to deny; and the more good-natured of the censors admitted that there was plenty of time for improvement. The more good-natured were also generally agreed that there had been

that two people living in it should elect to be duller than circumstances required of them to be ; and naturally Liaston society did not quite appreciate the singularly few charms it in itself possessed for those who were not to its manner born. Meantime, and unconscious of the interest they excited, Mr. Eveleigh and his daughter were peacefully and pleasantly occupied with their own pursuits.

His first semi-failure, and his consciousness that Nell was doubtful of the ultimate result made Mr. Eveleigh very desirous to make another attempt. Accordingly he arranged with his rather unwilling model to give him some sittings at any time in the day or in the evening that he had a little

spare time. All the morning after he had settled this Mr. Eveleigh made himself very busy with his preparations ; but it was not till the evening was far advanced that Angus Gray, unconscious of late dinners and unmindful of the short remaining light, made his appearance, coming up the steps from the gate with a business-like purpose in his face which faded out of it as he came to halt on the last step, and contemplated with some surprise the little verandah and its occupants. Mr. and Miss Eveleigh had dined and were having their dessert in the open air. Two very low and luxurious garden chairs with plenty of cushions were occupied by the father and daughter. Beside Mr. Eveleigh stood a little table with some wine and fruit on it. He was leaning back with a look of placid enjoyment on his pale face ; a book was on his knee, but he was not reading. He was lifting his wine-

cushions, was bending forward with her elbows on her knees and her cheek in one hand, while her eyes were fixed intently on a book she held in the other, with a little pucker of determined attention between her eyebrows. The pleasure her father derived from watching her had not much to do with her beauty. It was the utter absence in her whole attitude and expression of listlessness or weariness that pleased him. And her concentrated interest in the book she was reading also pleased him. It was a new life of an old painter, and it gratified Mr. Eveleigh in his present enthusiasm for art to find Nell also taking to the study of the same subject—for his sake, as he believed. If he could have looked

over her shoulder, and seen how casually the criticisms of the separate works of the great man were glanced at, and how eagerly the bright young eyes devoured the record of the struggling life, and the difficulties that beset the man's path, or could have felt her heart throb as she read of the courage that faced them and conquered them, Mr. Eveleigh would not have been so much pleased. It was the life of the man that so deeply absorbed the child, and by no means the accident of his genius, or the results of it; though in a secondary way Nell was by no means unable to appreciate these. Very pretty she looked in her cool white dress, as she sat there unconscious of the two pairs of admiring eyes fixed on her. The innate life and energy of the girl made itself felt even to Angus Gray, for in some undefined way he felt himself to be separated from her by a less wide gulf than that which

had ever come before the eyes of Angus Gray as this, to him, surprising beauty of Nell Eveleigh's. The small head supported so easily the thick plaits of hair, the brownness of which was so dark as to be almost black, and which were twisted round and round it with a distinct intention of displaying the natural form of it, for Mr. Eveleigh had educated his daughter's eyes to some extent. And though the head was so well proportioned as to appear small on the top of a throat which, for want of a newer and better way of describing it, may as well be called a 'white column,' meaning by that term to distinguish it from a thin, long neck which, if graceful, is never really beautiful, there was nevertheless plenty of room for

brains in the head ; and the forehead, which was curiously fair in contrast to the dark hair and eyebrows, was broad enough to satisfy the maddest of phrenologists. The eyes now bent on her book and which Angus Gray had seen looking out to sea with the colour of some seas reflected in them—a deep greyish blue—were calmer and clearer and more thoughtful eyes than those of the violet class, and less apt to soften. In Nell's eyes there was always plenty of affection for her father and kindness for her inferiors, if he had taught her to put disdain into them for her equals. And the fire of a passing anger and easily roused vexation many times caused them to darken and flash. But the fire of passionate love or passionate hate had never kindled in them, and never should kindle in them, Mr. Eveleigh fully intended. In them, and occasionally in her gestures, were all the

or fragile about her. Graceful she certainly was, but with none of the willow-like, bending, twisting grace of a giraffe. There was a dignity about her grace which caused Angus Gray to say to himself that she was 'a queen.' He did not even say 'princess,' as suggestive of high-born youth. Yet there was nothing very queenly in the start and exclamation of pleasure she gave when her father discovered Angus, and nodding good-naturedly to him without moving, said—

‘ Rather late, my man ! ’

Mr. Eveleigh had been expecting him all day without feeling more than a faint vexation as the hours went by and he did not come. The day had been hot, and Mr. Eveleigh was now agreeably tired, and was enjoying

his magazine and his fruit and wine in the pleasant evening coolness, and did not feel at the moment enthusiastic enough to set to work for half an hour, with the prospect of the light failing him then.

‘I’m sorry, sir. It’s just half-past eight. I’ve been on duty since half-past twelve,’ Gray answered apologetically.

‘Nell,’ said Mr. Eveleigh, with a sigh, ‘will you fetch me a block and some pencils?’

Nell disappeared through the window into the house, and meantime Mr. Eveleigh poured out some wine and offered it to the coast-guard. Gray refused it. When Nell came back with the drawing materials Mr. Eveleigh looked round for a third chair, and this time rose himself and fetched it, placing it opposite himself fully in the light, and requesting ‘Mr.—Mr.?’ [‘Gray,’ supplied the coast-guard, ‘*Angus* Gray,’ with a little stress upon the Christian name] to be good enough

comfortably back in his cushions, holding the block before him with one arm round it, and moving the other hand idly over it to make believe he was drawing. His amusement was caused by the very evident admiration for his model that Nell's honest eyes expressed ; and also a little by Grey's own embarrassment, as he vainly tried to look as if he were not being looked at. He fidgeted with his straw hat, and looked down, and coughed ; but there was no expression of pleasurable excited vanity on his conscious countenance. He looked nothing but extremely uncomfortable. And Mr. Eveleigh noticed, as also did Nell, that there was a certain grace in his embarrassed movements that took from them much of their awkwardness.

‘Angus!’ began Mr. Eveleigh, passionately.

‘Yes, sir,’ he responded at once.

‘Nothing—no,’ and Mr. Eveleigh bent his head apologetically, ‘I was merely going to observe, Mr. Gray, that Angus is an uncommon name. A highland name, if I am not mistaken? And Gray is surely as much an English as a Scotch name—certainly a lowland name?’

‘Very likely, sir,’ said Angus, changing his position, and leaning one arm over the back of his chair, and brightening up visibly. ‘Mother would hold a long yarn on my highland name if she got a chance. Many’s the time I’ve tired of listening to it,’ he added, with a kindly laugh.

‘And is your mother a highland woman?’ asked Nell, with interest.

‘So she says, miss,’ Gray answered, as if he did not know of his own knowledge.

a tale myself, and it's a poor one for all mother likes it so well. She's got some story of how her own mother was own and only daughter to the squire—the laird—she calls him—at the place where grandfather lived; and mother tells how she ran away with him who was but a little bit of a farmer. And the laird never forgave it, and small blame to him!' Gray added, heartily.

'Quite right, my man, he was not to be blamed!' said Mr. Eveleigh approvingly.

'Oh, papa! his own and only daughter!' exclaimed Nell indignantly, 'and perhaps,' she added, turning to Gray, 'your grandfather was very delightful, or—or—'

Gray laughed.

'It's long years since I set eyes on him,

but I remember going with mother to stay at the farm when I was a little one. It was one year that father was . . . but that's nought to do with grandfather . . . I couldn't say that I remember him very delightful, miss. A big, strong, hale, old man, with a temper of his own, and a bitter tongue that I never could abide to hear when he gave it to mother. I never saw his wife, the laird's daughter—she didn't live to be an old woman.'

'She died then, poor thing!' said Nell sympathetically; 'perhaps it was her death that made the poor old man cross and bitter,' she added, holding on to the romance of the story.

'Or perhaps,' said Mr. Eveleigh quietly, 'it might have been the effects of a little too much exposure to the dew of his native mountains, eh, Gray? I hope I do not say anything offensive?'

‘Oh!’ said Nell, disgusted for a moment; but recovering quickly from the shock, she stuck to her point.

‘It might be grief that drove him to—to’

‘I wouldn’t say it was *that* that made him the man he was, either, sir,’ said Angus, meditatively. ‘Many highlanders, I’ve heard tell, could beat him at that. I never heard mother blame it on that, neither. I fancy it was his nature—a hard, rough man all his life.’

‘But then what was it that made the poor lady marry him?’ asked Nell. ‘I daresay if you were only a little boy you could not see his good qualities,’ she added, loth to think that any laird’s daughter could run away with a man of the people who had

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nothing remarkable about him except a bad temper.

‘Mother says,’ said Angus, ‘that grandfather was the handsomest man in all the country side, and it is very likely true, as you might fancy, miss, if you were to see my old mother.’

‘A poor reason!’ exclaimed Nell with disdain.

‘Yes,’ assented Angus, ‘a poor reason.’ ‘And——’ he added after a pause, ‘it seems to me, for all that mother thinks different, that the laird had cause to be unforgiving. It’s the way of doing a thing, you see. From all I’ve heard it was the way she took that angered the laird ;—not trusting him, not telling him the truth—small blame to him that he was angry!’ repeated Gray, compressing his lips severely.

Mr. Eveleigh was not deeply interested, and Nell’s romance was demolished, and

apologise for having introduced it.

‘It’s a tale I’ve no pleasure in, but the laird’s Christian name was Angus, and that’s how I came by my name, sir.’

‘Do you think,’ said Nell slowly, ‘that your mother would tell it to me some day? I don’t think you have told it well,’ she added, smiling at him nevertheless, for if he had spoilt a pretty story, he had shown that his honest face belonged to an honest nature, and Miss Eveleigh was pleased with the coast-guard. Mr. Eveleigh thought the little air of well-bred condescension to his model was very prettily mixed with Nell’s childish interest in the man’s grandmother’s story; and he was quite willing that she should make the acquaintance of the mothers

and wives of all the men on the station if it would amuse her to do so. And so he made no objection when Gray assured her that his mother would be proud and honoured by a visit from Miss Eveleigh, and Nell signified her intention of making it before many days were over. The only fear was, Angus thought, that she would hear the story oftener than she cared for. And then Mr. Eveleigh, beginning to feel a little bored, signified to his model that the light was too bad for him to draw any more. Gray, as he rose, looked wistfully at the block, but Mr. Eveleigh turned it down on his knee, and smiled pleasantly while he told the man that it was not far advanced enough to be shown.

When Gray had disappeared down the steps Nell pounced upon it, and exclaimed in surprise as she saw a perfectly clean untouched surface.

‘ No, my child, I’ve done nothing, as you

is one of the most remarkable faces you ever saw,' and Mr. Eveleigh waited quite anxiously for Nell's opinion.

'I thought his conversation very interesting,—and his face is remarkable,' said Nell without enthusiasm for the face.

'I prefer the face myself,' said Mr. Eveleigh, 'but I'm glad the story amused you, child. If there's any truth in it, it might account for a certain air of refinement about the man.'


'How absurd you are, papa! What refinement could descend from a woman who married a coarse rough farmer for his beauty! Why should he not have a natural refinement of his own?' asked Nell indignantly.

‘ A “born gentleman,” eh, Nell ? ’ laughed Mr. Eveleigh. ‘ Have it your own way, child. Let me hasten to admit the fact of the man’s superiority, and spare me a list of “the people’s” innate virtues to-night ! ’

CHAPTER VII.

THE GRAYS.

MISS EVELEIGH was entirely unconscious that in her heart of hearts she agreed with her father that something of what they both recognised as 'superiority' in Gray might be the result of his grandmother having been the 'laird's' daughter. All Nell's principles were directly opposed to such a supposition, but her prejudices or instincts were highly in favour of it; and while she scouted the notion it influenced her. Mr. Eveleigh had given the matter no more than a passing thought, and had never recurred to it again; but Nell found herself thinking of the story with a certain interest, which her father could very easily have



crushed by pointing out to her how a small north-country farmer's daughter like Mrs. Gray would be likely to magnify the position of the 'laird,' the owner of the land, who from the Eveleighs' point of view, might after all be very much on the par of the farmer with regard to every thing that goes to the making of a gentleman. And as a matter of fact this was so. Angus Macpherson, 'the laird,' was sufficiently raised above his tenant to be violently enraged against his daughter when she preferred the handsome young farmer to the life of solitude she led with a father whose temper made by no means a heaven on earth of her highland home; but that was all. That he never forgave his daughter for this was true enough. But that came of the man's naturally unforgiving temper more than of his offended dignity. His daughter had deceived him, and cheated him, and left him. In these

means not so much because she preferred them as because she dared not use open means to gain her ends. The poor thing had her punishment, for her life at the farm was harder and rougher than it had been at home, and her husband's temper turned out to be nearly as bad as her father's, and his words far more cruel. After a time the laird, who had seen the little girl that was born to his daughter, had made some offer to the farmer as to the education of the child, coupled with conditions which the farmer refused to accept. If the child had been a boy things would have righted themselves in the end. As it was, to the farmer's bitter disappointment, no boy was born to him and his wife. The laird died, and the land passed

to another Macpherson, too distantly related and too well brought up to care to renew doubtful and unsatisfactory relationships. Then the laird's daughter died, and nothing was left to the farmer but the girl, who was a regular Ferguson like himself, and proud in proportion to her own common-placeness of the accident of her mother's ancient lineage. Any ambition that David Ferguson might have had with respect to his highland connection (he was a lowlander himself, though chance had settled him on Angus Macpherson's land) died out ; and he thought his daughter had not done so badly for herself when, on the occasion of a visit to an undistinguished but worthy aunt and uncle at Greenock, her beauty and her 'ancient lineage' captivated John Gray, a sea captain, of by no means a superior class so far as his manners went, but much respected and trusted by his employers, and

or his forms of speech which belonged to the now obsolete language of sailors of a past generation, and were loud and nautical ; and she was sincerely and deeply grieved at his comparatively early death, which took place when Angus was about thirteen ; the more so, as he left her entirely without provision, and thus obliged her to go back to her father and the farm. The boy Angus had been very fond of his father John Gray, and had amongst other inherited virtues got from him a supreme contempt for all life, or any following, ashore. He did not care for his cross old grandfather ; and an offer having been made by an old employer of his father's to get him into a training-ship for the navy, he persuaded his mother to

accept it for him. And thus it came about that he was educated into a modern sailor ; and being a universal favourite, and looking so 'superior,' was in a fair way to become in the course of years in reality a superior officer, when his grandfather died, leaving very little more than enough money to pay off all debts. His mother, now becoming an elderly woman, was again left without a home, and without a sufficient income. Then Angus at her entreaty left the sea, of which he was perhaps just a little tired, and went in for the coast-guard service, fully intending to rise as high in that as he could, and in the meantime to give his mother a home, in which she could with the help of the little her father had left her be tolerably comfortable for the rest of her life. This arrangement, no doubt, entailed sacrifices on both sides. Angus, who had become a petty officer in the navy, was obliged to go back to the beginning, as it

even a 'parlour,' and was 'no better than a poor woman.' At the same time the laird's granddaughter had never since her husband's death been much in the habit of using any such exalted apartment as a 'parlour.' There was one, it is true, at the farm, but the room commonly used was kitchen and living room all in one. Still the respectability of the family was maintained by the fact of the existence of the 'parlour.' And with regard to the companions her 'come-down' had forced upon her, while she looked down from an immense height upon the wives of her son's equals in the station, they were not in reality much more common and vulgar than the girl she had had to help her at her father's farm in her household duties, and who for

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weeks at a time was the only woman she had to speak to. Nor, if the truth were told, even than the wives of the farmers and little tradesmen who on rare occasions favoured her with a visit, and caused the sacred parlour to be opened for a hospitable tea, over which, in virtue of her ancient lineage and high position, as the widow of the captain of a merchant ship, she presided with dignity as queen of her company with great satisfaction to herself. Mrs. Gray dearly liked that position, and in spite of her little grumbles was not above feeling a secret pleasure in the respect which she exacted and obtained from the women of low degree, amongst whom she had come to live. If they and their husbands laughed at 'old mother Gray's airs' behind her back, she was none the wiser. And as she was really a good and kind woman, and ready to help them in any trouble, and always willing to

Indeed, they were beginning to feel that the rest of the station took a reflection of glory from the acknowledged 'superiority' of the Grays, and were just a little proud of them both. The mother had plenty of sense in the midst of her weaknesses, and never thought of claiming for herself the title of 'lady,' only asserting that if everybody had their rights she *ought* to have been a lady, because, she was fully persuaded, her mother had been one. And in this all the women were quite disposed to agree with her, as nearly all of them had an undefined notion that nothing but money was required to 'make' ladies of every one of them. As to the son, he claimed nothing, either for himself or his mother, and won everything, from the friendship and good will of the men, to

the deepest admiration of the women, and the rather too demonstrative affection of the children, who were not always as bright and clean as the outsides, and it is only fair to say most of the insides, of their homes, and had not always the well-washed look of their fathers, either with respect to their persons or their clothes. The men said he was such a good fellow, and the women said he was such a handsome fellow; and there was no jealousy or astonishment, and a good deal of kindness in the chaff bestowed on him when it leaked out, through his mother's very pardonable pride, that the gentleman up on the hill was painting his portrait. Angus, himself, was a little shamefaced about it, and was vexed that everybody knew the fact, but he had not seen his way to keeping the matter private, and Mr. Eveleigh had in no way seemed to desire that he should do so. It did not occur to Angus that Mr.

or curiosity in the mind of his model. And as to the chance of so much notice, and open admiration spoiling this son of the people, what could Mr. Eveleigh care about that? Perhaps if he had heard Gray's answer to a remark made to him on his return from the cottage that very evening in the hearing of all the men on the station, some suspicion of his model being after all more than the mere outside of a handsome man might have dawned upon him, and made him undesirous of further interviews with the owner of the splendid face.

‘Depend on it, Gray,’ one of the men had said to him after he had stood a fire of chaff and questions on the subject as patiently as he could, ‘it’s the girl’s doing!’

‘What girl?’ said Angus fiercely, ‘you’re not by chance speaking of the young lady?’ he added being unused to concealing his thought.

‘The young lady!’ mimicked the man who had just spoken, ‘hear to him, boys! A woman’s a woman all the world over, lady or no lady, and this one’s got eyes in her head, that’s all; and fine eyes they are as ever I see!’

The other men received this speech, which was delivered with a mock solemnity, with applause and laughter.

‘Gray’s the fellow for luck!—Dash it all, man, can’t ye take a joke?’ exclaimed another, hastily stepping back as Angus turned on him suddenly at the sound of his derisive laughter with a look in his face few of em had ever seen there. But Angus did not lift his arm to execute the evident desire in his eyes. On the contrary, he

calls himself a man will let pass. And look here, men, ye'll mind this all. The first that makes another o' the sort shall answer it to me !'

A silence followed this announcement, and then some of the men looked at each other with a half smile, and those well out of sight of Angus winked at each other. The smokers puffed harder at their pipes, and the perpetrator of what seemed to himself and all the rest of them a very innocent joke was yet sufficiently impressed by Angus's manner to say gravely and apologetically,

‘ No offence, Gray, not intentional, least-ways ;’ to which Angus responded as gravely,

‘ No offence, Mutter, . . . this time’—

and then with a visible effort in the silence that still obtained he added,

‘I’ll not believe but that ye’re all men enough to respect the name of an innocent girl, lady or no lady, when ye come to think—and—and . . . that’s all, and I’ll say good night!’ and with a nod of general forgiveness he went out of the group. They waited till he was well out of hearing, and then they all laughed again, but not ill-naturedly.

‘I doubt it’s serious!’ said Mutter, who had begged his pardon, winking at them all—‘hit, and no mistake, or my name’s not Joe Mutter!’

‘You shut up, Joe!’ said one of the older men, ‘you might take example of Gray yourself, and no harm done neither. He’s in the right o’t, after all.’

‘I never see him so put out like afore!’ said the man who had taken the liberty of

so short; the girl's as fine a lass as ever I see, I'll say it again, meaning no harm !'

'And as proud as a peacock! If it was anybody but Gray, I'd say it was showing plenty o' cheek to think as we could ever mean *serious* that she'd ever look at one of us so as to know us again if she seed us! But I'll say for Gray he's no conceit, though it's no fault of the women that he hasn't . . .

No—he's *hit*, boys, mark my words! When a man takes on like that at the mention o' a woman's name, it's serious-like!' said Joe Mutter, who prided himself on his experience in those matters.

'Ah well, Joe, we'll know what to think in future,' laughed one of the others. 'I've never noticed much squeamishness yet about

you, so I expect it's never been serious-like—often as it's been!' he added, turning the general laugh against Joe, who nothing loth took up his own defence with eagerness, and thus for the moment the discussion of Gray's affairs was put a stop to.

THE SITTINGS.

ON the next occasion that Gray found time to give Mr. Eveleigh a sitting, the latter set to work with some vigour, and became much interested in his subject. Again Nell was present and helped her father to make conversation, and the drawing was a more successful one than the first attempt in the boat had been. Nevertheless it did not please Mr. Eveleigh ; and finding that Nell did not mind the trouble of talking to the man, and beginning in fact to take a slight interest himself in his model, he requested another sitting. When that one came about he had changed his mind as to the precise position of his principal figure, and began a

new drawing, that required a good many more sittings, and so on ; till gradually Gray became a constant visitor to the cottage, where his visits were eagerly looked forward to by both Mr. and Miss Eveleigh for different reasons. Mr. Eveleigh, still in the height of enthusiasm for his proposed picture, for which the canvas had been prepared and some of the outlines put in, after having made sketches of Gray in many different positions, at last hit upon one that pleased him, and transferred it to the canvas, and set to work 'seriously.' All this had taken time, and was likely to take still longer time ; and for the first two or three weeks Mr. Eveleigh thoroughly enjoyed himself, and reflected his pleasant feeling that he was in a fair way towards painting a grand picture on the man whose face had suggested to him the brilliant and poetical idea. Finding Gray intelligent and thoughtful, and perfectly respectful, though

remarks, and took a good deal of pains to explain things to him if the subject happened to be one on which he was himself to any extent an authority. Seeing that Nell was much interested in life at sea, her father would give himself trouble to draw out Gray, and get him to tell them of the voyages he had made, and of the different places he had landed at, and would find himself wondering sometimes at the power of description the man displayed, and the intelligent interest he had evidently taken in all he had seen. It would come out occasionally, too, that Gray had not only observed but read, and profited by his readings, and had formed opinions of his own that he respected to the full as much as he did Mr. Eveleigh's. At

first this amused the latter ; but if he condescended to argue a point he was by no means pleased to find himself getting the worst of the argument, and the impression that Gray was a 'pig-headed fellow,' was one that grew upon him, and that he imparted to Nell several times ; and upon these occasions he would gracefully withdraw from the contest with a smile of superiority, and a feeling of having been bored a little that he resented. He tried, nevertheless, invariably to bring round Gray to his views, and would lend him books to convince him of his errors. The man's superior and refined appearance suggested to Mr. Eveleigh the desire of educating his taste, and to this end, to which he was attracted by the charm of novelty, he ordered Gray to read some of his own favourite poets and writers of fiction. But his selection was unfortunate, and not of a manly enough order to suit the coast-guard,

disgust, which he was half amused to find was increased by the fact that his daughter invariably agreed with Gray's sweeping condemnations on the pretty graceful sentimentalities he himself so much admired. The books Nell chose for the advancement of the education of this, to her, interesting son of the people, were much more to his liking than those her father advised for his perusal ; but to both he was intensely grateful, and undeniably the loan of them was a pleasure and a profit to him. And his 'sittings' at the cottage very quickly became a source of the most intense contentment to him, and also of interest. It was natural that he should think much of the new element let into his life by this intercourse with a father and

daughter like the Eveleighs. The former interested him to the full as much as the latter. He had seen and come in contact with men of all ranks and of various degrees of refinement. But with a dreamy self-indulgent recluse like Mr. Eveleigh, he felt himself in unknown waters. The meaning of such a life as Mr. Eveleigh led was not clear to him. A man who did everything by turns, and nothing long, was not quite a novelty to him. But that a man 'who called himself a man' could in the prime of life shut himself up in a secluded cottage with only a woman-child for a companion, and give himself up to 'womanish fiddle faddles,' such as the collecting of every useless thing under the sun; to the making of pictures that the coast-guard judged rightly to be 'not the real thing;' to readings of unprofitable books such as poetry and love-stories in all sorts of present and past tongues; and who seemed

all his contempt for the idle, useless life, he found himself unable to despise the idle, useless man. He even respected Mr. Eveleigh, and yet he found that it would have puzzled him to say why he did so. There was power in this lazy fine gentleman, Gray thought ; and this was a quality he felt himself capable of gauging, and to which all his own instincts led him to yield respectful homage. He felt himself impelled to do Mr. Eveleigh's bidding, simply by virtue of the latter's determination to be obeyed. If Mr. Eveleigh lent him a book and told him to read it, Gray read it conscientiously, whether he liked it or not ; and he very seldom did like the books Mr. Eveleigh recommended to him. One day when in a moment of extreme

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good nature Mr. Eveleigh pointed out to his model the transcendental merits of a portrait he possessed by an old Spaniard, of what appeared to Angus to be a preternaturally hideous young woman, and called upon him to admire it, Angus honestly tried to admire, and reddened under the good-natured contempt of the smile with which his confession of failure was received. If Mr. Eveleigh seemed to claim any little service from him he rendered it very willingly—and that he never would have done to a man he had lacked respect for. The influence of mind over matter scarcely accounted for this, for the coast-guard had as good a mind as Mr. Eveleigh's, better balanced if less refined. Neither was it the influence of superior rank, for Angus Gray was in his way as proud a man as Mr. Eveleigh, and had not a vestige of toadyism in his composition. It only needed to look at the man to recognise this, for part

tion called 'so superior.') 'Full of the calmest courage,' Mr. Eveleigh had described his model to Nell, and it was a true description. Passion, meanness, or littleness had no place in his face. Perhaps the absence of these made its beauty, though the features of the face were so good as to cause Mr. Eveleigh some little astonishment, and upset his theories on race and breeding. The square forehead, the curly brown hair, and fine honest brown eyes were features to be met with in perfection amongst all ranks indiscriminately ; more especially the brilliant eyes which are undeniably a beauty more common amongst the people than amongst their betters. But the well-set head, small ears, and straight nose, short round chin, and

well-shaped mouth of his model were features Mr. Eveleigh considered Angus had no right to. Even his hands were good, brown and hard as the skin of them undoubtedly was. And when he came to painting them, Mr. Eveleigh, after some wonderment, recurred again to the story of the 'laird's daughter,' and said to himself, and afterwards to Nell, that perhaps after all the laird had been a gentleman. And the girl again scouted the notion, but again pleased herself with it unconsciously. She had plenty of opportunities of studying the supposed signs of race in her father's model, for numerous sketches of him, more or less good, were strewn all over the little studio. Small advance had been made with the picture. Mr. Eveleigh had never been able thoroughly to catch the expression that had struck him in the moonlight, and though he had been poet enough to seize the idea of his picture

to judge himself incapable of ever executing it. And he was begining at that time also to be a little bored with the coast-guard's conversation. The intelligence that was undoubtedly in the man did not, as has been implied, take kindly to the peculiar form of development Mr. Eveleigh tried to force upon it. If instead of lending Gray novels, and poems, and handbooks of art, he had given him some better books on natural science and history than those Gray already possessed, he would have achieved a far better result. As it was, the coast-guard's remarks on the books he conscientiously read were disappointing to Mr. Eveleigh, who forgot that love stories have only a moderate interest for men who have passed their first

youth, and that Gray was scarcely in a position to judge of a story or a poem from the artistic point of view; and who, with regard to art, missed the fact that not only had the man no natural bias in that direction, but that he was absolutely ignorant of the very alphabet of most arts, and that consequently the simplest of Mr. Eveleigh's books were beyond him, and cost him more trouble to decipher than he altogether cared to take. All that Mr. Eveleigh's kindly, well-meant attempts at education did for Gray apart from the pleasure he derived from them was to open his eyes to the fact of the wide difference between his own interests and those of men of a more refined education, without creating in him any violent desire to bridge over the space between them. Not the faintest envy of Mr. Eveleigh possessed him; the wish to become himself 'a gentleman' never entered his head, even while he

time, in virtue of his rank as an officer in H. M.'s navy, have been allowed to shake hands with a lady like Miss Eveleigh when he wished her good morning and good night, instead of having merely to touch his cap as he had to do in the actual present. It is possible that Gray recognised distinctions between petty and superior officers more fully than distinctions of birth, being perhaps of too generous a nature himself to grudge honour where honour was due, and too much imbued with the spirit of the service to dream of any honour he might deserve being refused to himself because he had earned it instead of having been born to it. It certainly never occurred to him that there would be anything to prevent the Eveleighs from

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treating him as an equal if he were to raise himself to their social level, any more than it occurred to him to feel hurt at being treated as an inferior in rank when he was actually one. However, Providence had not pleased to preserve his grandfather, and the proudest position he could now ever hope to attain was to be first officer of H M.'s coast-guard ; and he was quite observant enough to notice that both Mr. Eveleigh and Nell recognised very little distinction between his first officer and himself, and to feel that in point of fact there was not much social respect paid to the post he was quite content at this time to set before himself as a very worthy one to achieve. He did not rank it himself with the position of a gentleman, simply because a gentleman seldom held it. And he must thus always remain on a different level from the Eveleighs ; and in this recollection he found both comfort and safety.

CHAPTER IX.

A CORRECTION.

WHILE Mr. Eveleigh was thinking of signifying to Angus Gray that he was getting a little tired of failing to reproduce the splendid face, and was only refraining from doing so because Nell's lively interest in this son of the people amused him, Mrs. Gray was on the tiptoe of expectation of a visit from the young lady at the cottage. For her son had reported Miss Eveleigh's wish to hear the story of the laird's daughter from the laird's granddaughter's own lips; and Mrs. Gray was longing to repeat it again to a willing listener, for she had told it to all the women of the station whom she favoured with her notice, and they were just a little tired of

hearing it. But day after day passed and no Miss Eveleigh appeared. Vainly had Mrs. Gray put on her best cap, and folded the whitest of cambric across her capacious bosom, and seated herself at the window to watch the approach to the station houses. The fact was that Nell was shy, and had not yet summoned up her courage for the interview. Her old friend the farmer in the valley was an acquaintance of Mrs. Gray's and was too honest a radical to like her 'airs and graces,' when she tried to convince him by her manners that if everybody had their dues, &c. &c. . . . she would be in a much better position than a poor little valley farmer of about half-a-dozen fields. And thus Nell Eveleigh had a secret fear that the mother of her interesting son of the people would prove to be a vulgar, loud, old woman, whom she would rather not know, and who would put an end for ever to the romantic side of the

‘ I’m thinkin’ your young lady will be more o’ the fine lady than ye make out, Angus lad,’ Mrs. Gray would say. ‘ Here’s nigh upon a month I’ve tidied up myself and the house for to do ye credit in her eyes, my son, and never a word of her ! ’

‘ She will most likely have forgot,’ Angus was foolish enough to reply one day.

‘ Forgot ! Is your mother just like any o’ the common women folk here to be treated to messages that people forget soon as they’re spoken ! ’ said the old woman angrily.

‘ It was no message, mother. She said nought but that she wondered if you would tell the tale to her better nor me,’ her son answered.

‘ Then ye had no call to make a message of it, Angus, as I’m bound to say I understood

as clear as daylight that your Miss Eveleigh was to give us a call.'

'A call! mother!' exclaimed the young man angrily.

'Well, and what for no? Was no your own mother's mother'

'There, there, I've heard that afore!' said Angus getting up, and unceremoniously leaving the cottage in the middle of his mother's speech, with a 'roughness that Miss Eveleigh could not have believed him capable of, though it was after all mere outside rudeness, and did not in the least offend the old woman who was not unaccustomed to it on occasions. For his own peace Gray determined to remind Miss Eveleigh that very evening of her intention, and accordingly he waited till the very last moment when the sitting was over, and Mr. Eveleigh had dismissed him, to turn back as he was going out of the door, and say,

taking too great a liberty’

Nell coloured hotly, conscience-stricken, while she answered graciously,

‘Not at all, I shall be very happy to go. If I had known that your mother expected me I should have gone long ago.’

Mr. Eveleigh thought his daughter’s message a shade too civil, and was not at all sure that Gray had not taken a liberty. And he made up his mind directly that he had had enough of the coast-guard’s society. So he spoke to the point at once.

‘Miss Eveleigh shall go and see your mother, Gray. I shall be pleased if she can be of any use, in return for the service you have rendered me. And, look here, my man, take this for your trouble, and if I should want

you again I will send to you, and I am sure you will oblige me—but I don't think I shall want you, I have done all I can.' Mr. Eveleigh spoke the last words with regret in his voice, and took a melancholy lingering look at the 'splendid face' as he handed its owner a sovereign. To his great surprise the face paled under its bronze colour, and a flash of angry light entered the coast-guard's eyes. It was not that Gray despised a sovereign, but that he was offended at the offer of payment for a voluntary service, and that Miss Eveleigh should see her father offer him money in that way.

'You asked me to oblige you, sir,' he said, drawing back. 'I did not expect, and would not take payment for a favour it has been a pleasure to me to give, if you will excuse my saying so, sir.'

The man spoke with some dignity, and

‘As you please, my man; I’m much obliged for the “favour,” and you will know where to come to when you want one in return. Good evening.’

Gray was turning away feeling sore and hurt, for Mr. Eveleigh, after having amused himself by treating him almost as an equal, was putting him back in his place more by his manner than his words, when Nell stopped him.

‘Stay a moment, Mr. Gray; I should like to lend you a book I think you would like to read, if you will wait till I fetch it;’ and the girl rose and came to the door and passed out of the room, while Gray held it open for her. Then he looked round, and said quietly ‘Good evening, sir,’ followed her out, and shut the door. Nell was actuated simply

by a desire to soothe the man's wounded pride by a little extra attention, and Gray simply preferred to wait outside on the steps to remaining in the same room with Mr. Eveleigh. But this Mr. Eveleigh could not know intuitively, and somehow he did not like to think that his daughter could be making an excuse to say something she did not wish him to hear to Angus Gray the coast-guard; and yet he did think it, and it vexed him a little, though he did not attach any great importance to the little ruse. He imagined that Nell, who held, or pretended to hold, peculiar notions respecting the feelings of the lower classes, had not been pleased at the way in which he himself had spoken of her visit to Gray's mother, and was going to send another and still more civil message to the old woman. Long afterwards he recurred to the little scene, and attached a very different meaning to it, but now he

nine o'clock, a pale moon in a pale evening sky shed a silvery light over the sea. The soft greens of the foreground took a grey twilight tint, the distant cliffs to the right were purple with the evening shades, the faintest breeze just stirred the leaves, and the ripple of the summer sea breaking along the shore sounded softly in the silence. Calm was in the air, on the sea, on the near heights, in the distance—and calm was in the outward seeming of the coast-guard, as he leant with folded arms against the door-post, motionless, looking out over the sea. Nell coming softly downstairs stood by him before he became aware of her presence. The girl took the whole scene into her memory in a moment and never forgot it. The peace of it appeared to her to harmonise so perfectly with the calm

courage of the man who was seemingly letting its beauty sink into his soul as he gazed at it with those quiet eyes. Perhaps unconsciously the 'peace divine' did soothe poor Gray; but a mortal sadness that it was the last time he would stand there, was the only feeling that consciously swayed him. He started as Nell spoke.

'I like it too,' she said, standing out bareheaded, and holding up her fresh young face to the pale sky; 'but there's something sad about these quiet nights.'

Angus had not been thinking of the night or its beauty till this moment. Now he looked round him, and down to the sea and up at the sky; and then at the girl standing there and saying that peace was sad.

'Ye'll be too young yet to like it well, miss,' he said softly; and he smiled at her as she turned to look at him, with the same

‘No,’ said Nell, decidedly; ‘of course I’m young, but it isn’t that. It’s my nature. I like life and action, not peace and stillness—and—and— I wish you wouldn’t say “miss!”’

Gray coloured.

‘What else but “Miss Eveleigh” could such as me presume to say?’ he said in a vexed voice. He did not like the remark. It was one thing to grieve over the gulf that separated him from such as the Eveleighs, and feel hurt at being put quietly back to his place when it suited Mr. Eveleigh’s caprice to remind him of it; but quite another thing, and one that did not please him, that his young queen should descend from her throne to make an advance to a subject who had himself always remembered the differences

between them. In a moment the careless words of his fellow coast-guard, 'A woman's a woman all the world over, lady or no lady, and this one's got eyes in her head, that's all!'—words that had angered him at the time almost beyond bearing, recurred to him. Was this beautiful girl after all only like other women? Had she made a pretence of bringing him a book to come out here, and give him to understand that he might call her by her Christian name? Not for nothing was Angus Gray universally pronounced 'superior;' for few men of his class would have felt anything but elation at the thought, and none of his mates could have understood the acute pain the momentary suspicion gave him. But as quickly as the pain had come to him it passed, and was as instantaneously succeeded by repentance for having even allowed it to hover on the threshold of his mind.

Mr. Gray, but I do so dislike to hear you say it. It is like the shopkeepers! And I am afraid, I am sorry, but I can't help it, I am *afraid* I can't bear shopkeepers! I know it is wrong, but I couldn't have a friend who was a grocer or a draper!'

Angus laughed, a light-hearted laugh of relief, at the girl's seriousness.

'There's a many grocers and drapers speaks better English than you think for, but as for one of them being fit to be a *friend* to such as you, it's not in nature as it could be,' he said, decidedly.

'I am afraid you are right, but then I feel that it ought to be in nature! I am always telling myself that they must have hearts, and minds, and feelings just like other

people, and yet they do seem *so* different—so different from people who have to work in other ways, I mean. I *like* to think, for instance, that you are my friend, Mr. Gray.' And Nell looked up into his face, with her clear grey eyes filled with the kindest light and trust; and no honest man, least of all Angus Gray, could have misinterpreted their expression. He coloured again, but this time with pure pleasure.

'Thank you, miss—Miss *Eveleigh*' he hastily corrected himself, and Nell laughed.

'You told me once you would be "grateful for any instruction," and you see I have remembered that. I should like if it were the custom that everybody should be called simply by their Christian names. That everybody should speak to me as Nell Eveleigh, for instance. But then it must be *everybody*, and it is not the custom,' she added regretfully. 'There are so many many

‘ I doubt you think so for the same reason you were thinking peace was sad. The world’s a good enough place in its way, and some day, please God, there’s a better a-waitin’ for us,’ and the coast-guard lifted his cap gravely for a moment, as he quietly expressed his simple faith.

Nell Eveleigh, the advanced radical of seventeen, whose faith was taking refuge already in an enthusiasm of humanity, looked in silent wonder at this simple-minded believer in the old myths she and her father smiled at. A man who must be thirty at least ; an oppressed son of the people who had mind and courage enough to have been one of the rulers and leaders of better things if a higher education had been within his reach ; that this man

should think the world was a good world, and, after thirty years' experience and thought, still believe in a better world beyond! It took Nell's breath away.

'This is the book I wanted you to read,' she said, looking down, after a moment's pause; 'but I don't think you will like it if—if you don't feel that there are many things that want altering.'

'I didn't say that; but it's no business of mine to alter them. All as a man like me has got to do is to obey orders; and, as my old mother says, "keep his own door-step clean." I'll take the book if you please, Miss Eveleigh,' and he held out his hand for it.

Nell hesitated, and Angus smiled at her hesitation as he would have smiled at a child.

'I'm not afeared—afraid, that is,' he corrected. 'A man's a poor creature that's

she had remembered the message to his mother she had, as Mr. Eveleigh had guessed, intended to send.

They had each forgotten that Angus had had his dismissal, and that in the natural order of things these visits to the cottage must cease; and no farewell was said by either of these would-be friends to the other.

CHAPTER X.

‘THE FITNESS OF THINGS.’

NOT very many days longer did Angus have to endure his mother's reproachful references to Miss Eveleigh's neglect. Before the day came round when it had been his habit for the last week or two to go up to the cottage, and before, therefore, he had had occasion to realise that he would never go there again, Nell made her appearance, coming up the steep path that led only to the houses of the coast-guards. These stood picturesquely above the harbour, to the right; and Mr. Eveleigh had often pointed out to his daughter what he considered the charming variety of colour in them. Nell was not sure that they were

whitewashed windows and door-steps, and with the neatness and order of the little gardens that sloped down the hill in front of them. Now, as she came up the path, she turned to look at the lovely view, and wondered a little whether what she had read somewhere of the indifference of the people to natural beauty could possibly be true. How any man or woman could fail to be happier with such an outlook as this than in a cottage in the middle of a flat field of potatoes, or in two rooms in a dirty little street, was a mystery to Nell, whose very life she thought would languish without space and light, and beautiful natural surroundings. Then she turned again, and went slowly on, looking at the houses

and the men and women who were standing about, or sitting on the benches placed outside each door. The old black houses with their tall, whitewashed chimneys, and brown and red-tiled roofs, were picturesque ; and so were the sailors, with their blue serge frocks, and their more or less (more rather than less) handsome, manly faces ; but how about the women ? Two or three stood at their doors with babies in their arms, and decidedly took off from the effect of the whole. Their poor washed-out, and in some cases not too clean cotton gowns showed up very dingily against the whitewash and the bright white pebbles that bordered the path by their doors. In front of one of the houses there was a little domestic scene that would have been pretty if it had not been for a snuffy-looking brown merino gown worn by the young woman, who had evidently 'dressed' herself, and come outside

tensely observant of this apparently unequal pair, that she did not notice how all the others were observant of herself. She saw that the obnoxious gown was ornamented at the neck by a very flat and variegated bow of many-coloured ribbons, yellow, and green, and red preponderating. The hands that held the work were large, and red, and coarse ; the face was bent down over her work, so that Nell could only see the top of a plait of cheap false hair that adorned the woman's head. Beside this embodiment of want of grace and bad taste sat the sailor-husband in his blue serge, in all the ease of attitude his comfortable loose clothes induced, his black curly head as nature made it—a fine specimen of a man,

in simple and picturesque attire in which he was thoroughly at home, made in a fashion and of a colour that showed up what good looks he had, instead of swamping them in their own distinctive ugliness. There was something in the situation, at the same time, so suggestive of contented enjoyment of each other's society, of close companionship, and of domestic happiness, in spite of its apparent incongruity, that made Nell feel sure that the man thought his wife something to be proud of, and the parti-coloured bow a special triumph of art; and also that the woman felt herself to be in the pleasing position of the superior being in possession of a humble and submissive and attentive spouse. The man's superiority after all only consisted in his clothes, thought Nell, with an involuntary pang and a momentary wonder how Angus Gray would seem in the attire of the Liaston grocer;

and her eye falling upon two men who were standing smoking and talking, she saw one nudge the other in the side, and both look at her with a glance of good-natured amusement. Nell's ire was easily roused and she specially disliked to be laughed at. Why they laughed she had not an idea; possibly it was at the shape of her hat, or the cut of her dress; and it was with a feeling of great relief that she saw Angus Gray come out of one of the further houses, and walk quickly down the white pebble-bordered path to meet her. As he passed the two men she saw him give them an indignant glance, and when he came up to her his face was very red. Nell's grew red for sympathy; and being a little nervous and uncertain as to how her visit to Mrs.

Gray would turn out, she walked past the two 'rude men' with her queenly head well held up, but with an undeniable heightening of colour on her cheeks. Some irresistible impulse made Angus Gray turn his head and glance at Mutter, who was one of the rude men, after they had passed ; and poor laughter-loving Joe had not time to choke off the broad grin that was spreading all over his cheerful face, as Angus caught him in the act of giving the other man another delighted dig with his elbow, and executing a little caper with his heels at the same moment. They meant no harm, either of them ; and they believed in Gray's superiority so entirely that they thought Miss Eveleigh only showed her good taste in believing in it too. But all incipient love affairs, and Joe was convinced this was one, called forth his inclination to broad joking. And there was something, as he considered,

attaching the slightest importance to his absurdities. Nevertheless, he could not help it that the proverb about lookers-on seeing most of the game should come into his head as he valiantly resisted the desire to fly back and shake Mutter by the throat. Neither could he help it that a thrill of barely recognised hope passed through him as he wondered over Nell's blush. And yet, when he had brought her into his cottage and set her down beside his mother, how out of place she looked there! What perfectly different orders were represented by Mrs. Gray and Miss Eveleigh! Just at first there was a moment when Nell, a little ruffled by Joe Mutter's behaviour, and consequently rather more than usually stately

and courteous, had seriously alarmed Mrs. Gray. The old woman received the young one with much ceremony, and many old-fashioned curtseys, and covert references to the length of time she had been looking to be honoured by a visit from Miss Eveleigh in her poor home ; and she spread herself out as she spoke, and stroked down her apron with an affectation of the humility suitable to her adverse circumstances, and of a poverty she was not used to, that made Nell for a moment sorry that she had come. But there was something motherly and kind in the bright dark eyes that rested with unfeigned welcome and admiration on her young guest, that touched the heart of the lonely girl, who had no woman friend to speak to. Mrs. Gray was, moreover, a perfect picture of an old woman, and Nell loved to look at anything beautiful. The large, brilliant, dark eyes contrasted well

a frilled border of muslin, and long white muslin strings tied comfortably under the full square chin, which was scarcely doubled, only rounded enough to take off from its severity. Mrs. Gray, as has been said, was a sensible old woman with regard to everything but her pride in her connection with the Macphersons. And her sense, and also her good taste showed in her devotion to the fashions that had met with the approval of John Gray in her girlhood. Caps had been caps when she was young and had learnt how to make them ; and none of the flimsy bits of cheap lace which much inclined in general to greyness when they were not literally black for economy's sake, worn by the other women of the station,

had the homely grace of Mrs. Gray's beautifully plaited fine thick muslin frills; and little she grudged the labour of love she bestowed on the getting up of them. And in her girlhood soft muslin had been folded over the rather open make of her gowns, modestly to cover her neck; therefore in her old age soft muslin covered the broad bosom it now took many folds to conceal. Mrs. Gray had two gowns, one of dark grey linsey, and one of tolerably thick black silk, both made perfectly plain, and neither of them quite touching the ground. On the present occasion she had on the linsey, and thus the fitness of things in the little cottage was perfectly preserved. Oh! if the young woman outside could but have understood the beauty of grey linsey and white muslin, thought Nell regretfully, as she contemplated the mother of Angus, and forgave her airs and graces for the sake of her beautiful old

tire satisfaction round it, Nell detected the satisfied glance in a moment, and followed it with pleasure. No mere stupid old grumbler after lost advantages of fortune could have made the little room so pretty and homelike. Spotless cleanliness and comfortable relics from the farm in the way of furniture were not its only specialities. There was china on the shelves that would have delighted Mr. Eveleigh's heart, but that Mrs. Gray only valued because it had belonged to her father's mother. The little windows had deep crimson damask curtains looped up on each side of them, that threw a warm shade over everything ; the windows had a deep ledge, and opened in the middle. Both sides of one

was open, and on the ledge stood pots of late geraniums and fuchsias, with perhaps more green than flowers on them, through the leaves of which twinkled the distant, shining, sunny sea. The room was kitchen and living-room combined; but the pots and pans were kept in a small back kitchen, and Mrs. Gray did none of her hard household work before the eyes of anybody, always turning even her son out when the inevitable scrubblings and cleanings were going on.

'I think it is a very pretty home,' said Nell simply; 'and Mr. Gray is very lucky to have a mother instead of a wife,' she added, making unkind comparisons between the snuffy merino and the dark-grey linsey.

Mrs. Gray beamed with delight. Her *bête noir* was Angus' future wife.

'Deed then, and you're a sensible lassie, my dear,' she said, forgetting her airs and

wives, and that's what I'm always telling him ; am I no, Angus lad ? ' she said, smiling up at him ; and Nell smiled too, and looked up at him also, with a thorough endorsement of his mother's statement ; and neither of the women thought anything of the meaning of the deep red that spread over his face, as he laughingly replied,

‘ A man might manage to choose a wife of the sort that father chose, mightn't he, mother ? ’

‘ He might so, lad, if he could manage to go back to the time when your father made his choice,’ the old woman answered proudly ; ‘ but girls were different in my young days to what girls are now. ‘ Only to look at their chinnongs, and feathers, and

flowers, that they ware their money on, makes me sick ! doesn't it now, Miss Eveleigh ?' And as she appealed to Nell, Mrs. Gray looked her visitor over, and became aware of a long feather in her hat, and hastened to add :

' I'm alluding to girls of our class you'll understand, Miss Eveleigh ; that's, to say, when I say *our* class, I mean the class me and my son have had the misfortune to come down to belong to,' and Mrs. Gray looked down with mock humility, half expecting Nell to contradict her.

But Nell never thought of doing so ; she took Mrs. Gray's words literally. They started her on one of her hobbies, and she dashed into her views with regard to the education of the people's taste, with a momentary enthusiasm, which very quickly subsided as she saw an expression of the most intense surprise and mystification spreading

her foolish youthful schemes for regenerating the people always called forth.

‘The “fitness of things,”’ said Mrs. Gray, also looking at Angus, and repeating Nell’s words, ‘What’ll that be, Angus lad?’ she asked humbly, with such a bewildered expression that Angus’ smile changed to a laugh.

‘Miss Eveleigh’s wanting us all to know our stations in life and keep to them, and yet to be as clever, and refined, and well-educated as them that’s far above us, and has plenty of time to learn what’s “good taste,” and plenty of money to buy it!’ he answered, not without an inflection of bitterness in his voice.

Nell reddened.

'It would not have cost more money to buy a — a — grey linsey and some muslin, than to buy a brown merino and that hideous ribbon!' she said quickly, hurt at being, as she considered, misunderstood.

This remark, at least, Mrs. Gray was quite able to follow. She was 'quick at the up-take,' as she herself would have expressed it, in all matters familiar to her, and she had with her own eyes seen Jane Davidson 'dressed up' that very afternoon in as ugly a gown as it was possible to see, answering to the above description. Therefore she guessed in a moment what Nell referred to, and appreciated the compliment to her own apparel immediately.

'Deed, and ye're right there, Miss Eveleigh! If that's your meaning I'm quite of your way of thinking. I can't abide yon gown of Mrs. Davidson's, nor yon ribbon neither!

a taste in her clothes. Nor I can't abide them false plaits neither. But she aye says how that her hair is scanty-like, and they're cheaper in the end nor caps. And as for yon ribbon it was a kind thought of Davidson's to buy it for her, though the coat o' many colours might be a joke to it; that I *will* say. And I'll not say, as I was hinting at *Fane's* being through-other and feckless. She's a good wife to him, I'll say that for her, and Davidson's fond of her, as he has good right to be!' concluded the old woman, her beautiful brown eyes shining with kindness, as she thus praised her young neighbour, and proved that her scorn of the young women of the present day did not prevent her from being just, and giving

honour where honour was due to any of them.

'They looked very happy together,' assented Nell, in a subdued manner, feeling vexed and humiliated at having appeared to Angus to be guilty of the bad taste of talking, as it were, over his mother's head, and looking wonderingly at Mrs. Gray's broad forehead and bright intelligent face, and trying to understand why she had been mystified.

This was her first acquaintance amongst the women of the people, and it came upon her with a little shock of surprise to find her own ways of thinking and speaking, even on such a common subject as good taste in clothes, as far removed from Mrs. Gray's as if she were an inhabitant of some unknown region, speaking in an unknown tongue of experiences that were quite outside even of Mrs. Gray's imagination. It

things as they were.

A little silence fell on the three, a scarcely perceptible pause, but long enough for Angus to realise to their fullest extent the differences between his mother and Nell. Then Mrs. Gray broke it.

‘There’s one thing I’ve been thinking of, and thinking of, and wishing for ye to come that I might ask ye, if ye will not think I’m making too bold, my dear young lady,’ and the old woman looked with some diffidence at Nell, and a faint colour beautified her brown cheek as she spoke, ‘and that’s—that’s—just the picture! Eh, but I *would* like fine to see it! Do ye think I could get a sight of it, my dear?’ and Mrs. Gray bent forward and laid her hand

persuasively on Nell’s knee, gazing eagerly into the fair young face, and not seeing, or at least not heeding, the objections in pantomime that Gray was making to her request.

‘To be sure!’ said Nell hastily, ‘I was very nearly forgetting! The fact is I thought you would like to see it, for I remembered Mr. Gray saying he would like to show it to you, and so—and so—,’ she went on, diving into her pocket, and bringing out a tiny roll, ‘I brought one,’ and she began to untie the string.

‘That wee bit thing!’ exclaimed Mrs. Gray in deep disappointment, ‘that’ll never be it!’

Nell laughed. ‘This is one of the sketches. Didn’t Mr. Gray tell you? The picture is scarcely begun yet.’ And here Nell sighed and became suddenly grave, as

that the old woman could see it properly.

‘Eh ! but it’s speaking ! It’s just his ain sel’. Eh ! but he *is* bonnie, dear lad !’ exclaimed the mother, relapsing into broad Scotch in her excitement, and peering down at the sketch Nell held with a suspicious glistening in her old eyes.

‘It isn’t bad !’ said Miss Eveleigh calmly, eyeing it critically. ‘I really think this is the best of all those my father has done of you, Mr. Gray,’ she added, looking with a smile from the sketch to the blushing Angus. ‘But he said I might bring it for you—I am very glad you like it,’ and she put it into Mrs. Gray’s hands.

‘It’s never for me ? Eh ! but I *am* set up ! We’ll have as grand a frame as money’ll

buy, Angus, my lad. Eh! but he’s bonnie. Now is he no, Miss Eveleigh?’

Nell neither laughed nor blushed, but she did not look again at Angus as she answered quietly,

‘Yes, it makes a good sketch, I think, and the dress is picturesque.’

‘But if this is for me, what’ll ye have for yourself?’ demanded Mrs. Gray, almost hugging the sketch, but preparing to give it up if Nell had no other.

‘Oh, why there are about a dozen more! Are there not, Mr. Gray? My father sketches quickly, and wished to have a good many positions.’

‘A dozen and more! Eh, my lad, ye may be proud! There’s nobody’s lad but my Angus worth the painting, that I *will* say!’ said proud Mrs. Gray.

‘They say every mother thinks her own goose a swan!’ said Angus, with rather a

woman's honest satisfaction in it, and read as much love as pride in her glistening eyes as she devoured the sketch with them. And Nell, looking at them both, understood that it was his love for his mother that made her praise sweet to him, and not vanity that prevented him from being so falsely modest as to disclaim. After a little more talk with Mrs. Gray, Nell went away, but not before she had promised to come again. This time, on her walk past the other houses, she was accompanied not by Angus, but by Mrs. Gray, who insisted on seeing her to the gate. Angus remained behind, leaning up against the doorway, and watched them. As Nell again passed the young couple seated by their cottage door, the woman raised her head

from her work, and looked at her. Nell returned her look with some interest and an attempt not to see the gown and the bow, and was rewarded by the sight of as sweet, and true, and pleasant a face as it was possible to see. Where would have been, after all, the good of teaching her how frightful her clothes were, if it was all the same to Davidson what she wore, and if he had chosen the ribbon for her, and both of them were happy in regarding it with pride and pleasure? Nell bent her stately young head and smiled, and the woman responded readily and pleasantly to her greeting, while Davidson struggled to his feet and pulled his forelock, grinning from ear to ear with delight at the young lady's notice of his wife. Nell went away a little shaken in one of her pet theories, but upon the whole feeling that her visit to Mrs. Gray had been a success after all. She liked the beautiful old woman, and her strong

Gray, nevertheless, Nell told her father when she ended her account of her visit to the coast-guard station. Mr. Eveleigh replied that as far as he could see there was nothing very uncommon about Gray but his face. As a rule he felt no interest in people of Mrs. Gray's class, and did not profess to feel any, but he listened to Nell patiently, and felt a little amused by her remarks. And he was vaguely conscious of a feeling of some relief and satisfaction that she could chatter about them in so open and unconcerned a manner, and did not appear to resent his want of interest in Gray himself.

CHAPTER XI.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES.

THE careless talk of the men at the coast guard station had at first roused in Angus Gray only an honest indignation. But 'death and life are in the power of the tongue' in more ways than one ; and so Joe Mutter's words were to prove. Gray understood perfectly well the 'luck' that was supposed to have fallen to him ; and while he had indignantly crushed the suggestion the instant it was made, and said even to himself that it was an insult to Miss Eveleigh, he could not drive it out of his thoughts. Over and over again, as time went on, he found himself pondering on the impossibility of

acquaintance with the ways of looking at things of the women of their own class. He thought of the contemptuous curl of her pretty lips, and the disdainful glance of her clear eyes, as she pronounced the reason his mother gave for the choice of the laird's daughter of the 'handsomest man in all the country side,' a 'poor reason.' And yet how evident was her own innocent admiration of himself! And Angus would colour all over his face when alone in his boat he recalled the proofs of this. Not admiration alone, either, but interest also; for had she not talked to him and divined his real tastes, and lent him books that suited him better than those Mr. Eveleigh told him to read? But here Gray would

pull up his thoughts, and assure himself that it was just, because Nell Eveleigh was so far above him that she could, without loss of dignity, show these signs of admiration and interest. He would have been sorry to think otherwise, for he was no vain fool, and rated at their true worth the advantages nature had bestowed on him, and which in his own class were far too highly valued. He had seen Nell look at a ship in full sail in the sunlight with just the same pleased admiration in her eyes as they held when she turned them on him. It gave him far greater pleasure to remember what she had said to him than how she looked at him. But though he judged Nell truly by the light of his own natural refinement, he thus drifted into a way of thinking about her in his solitary hours that ought to have warned him of possible danger to his peace of mind.

It was only two months ago that he and

could keep a man at Liaston who might go elsewhere, had remarked to each other when they saw her that the daughter was 'a fine young woman,' and had never at any other moment given them a serious thought! Two weeks ago it was the summer time, and now already the days were drawing in, and the autumn reds and browns were mingling their deep colours with the fading summer greens. The freshness had passed from the year, but all its beauty had only deepened and increased since the evening that Angus had paid his last visit to the Eveleighs' cottage. He was thinking of how so short a time had changed everything, and of that last time now, as he leant back against the shadow of a rock in the valley this afternoon. He had

had an hour or two to spare, and had come out with Nell's book, which he had not yet had time to read, to digest it in peace and quiet. But the sun was still powerful, though it was the end of August, and he was hot with his rapid climb up the side of the cliff to his present resting-place. The book did not look interesting to him. It was one that required first a willing mind to do it justice ; and Angus Gray was too much occupied with the difficulties and dangers in his own path, to be able to spare much interest to the record of the trials and troubles of a dead man, who had spent a toilsome life in striving in the darkness of lost faith to strike a light to lead his fellows to moral heights, that in their holiest dreams they never dreamed of, and could never reach to, even if the guiding light were clearer and steadier than the uncertain glimmer that shone from moment to moment round this self-elected leader as he

lacked to the more practical age and to the experience of Angus Gray. The writer's belief in the inherent nobility of humanity had pleased the girl whose generous nature was revolted by the doctrine of nothing for nothing. Goodness for the sake of goodness was what she would have the world strive after. Angus Gray knew better. It was a doctrine too high at least for his mates ; too high for most of the men whose paths had crossed his own ; too high for his kind-hearted commonplace, handsome old mother ; and for practical purposes a chimera. Heaven and hell, rewards and punishments, were according to the spirit of ' the service,' and for his part he was no friend to any new-fangled nonsense. But he would read the book to see

what Miss Eveleigh thought worth reading ; and meantime he laid it open beside him on the grass, after having merely turned over the leaves, and glanced at the contents. He had matters more serious wherewith to occupy his mind. If, as he had said to Nell, a man was a poor creature who could be turned from his own ways of thinking by a book, what, he asked himself, was a man who was allowing discontent and worry to enter his life because of a girl who was as far above him as the stars ? Perhaps if he had been as thoroughly convinced as he tried to believe himself of the distance between them, neither discontent nor worry would have come to him. But although he was not aware of it himself, and would have scorned the notion if it had it been suggested to him, he had been insensibly influenced to some extent by the innuendoes of Joe Mutter and the other men. A thing that seemed possible to his mates, most of them

the service which Joe had got hold of, and recounted in private to the others, determined as he was to establish a precedent for the glorification of his favourite and much-admired friend Gray. Angus of course had not heard these conversations when they had any reference to his own affairs ; nevertheless, many hints which he had carefully avoided noticing, had conveyed to his mind the idea that the men were interesting themselves about him. It angered him and comforted him both together. What had been, might be. And yet when he thought, as he was thinking on this autumn afternoon, of the serious difficulties in his way, he could see no way of overcoming them. To begin at the very beginning, what reason had he for supposing

for a moment that he could ever succeed in raising a warmer feeling in Nell's young heart than the friendly interest she now so openly professed? It was the height of presumption on his part even to think of it, Angus acknowledged to himself sorrowfully; and yet, and yet—! The girl was very young, and had nobody else to speak to. She seemed to hold that all men and all women were equal, and always treated him with the consideration due to a being who was in possession of a mind, a heart, and an individuality of his own; and not as Mr. Eveleigh treated him, as simply a natural curiosity in that he had any distinctive differences, however slight, from the animal creation, from which he evidently considered the sons of the people very little removed. Mr. Eveleigh had been kind to him, as he would have been kind to an intelligent horse or dog, and liked him in the same sort of way. And Angus was not grateful for such

they were talking about the fancy of the gentleman at the cottage.

‘As how should he,’ one of them had answered, with calm contempt, ‘shut up there all day a-doing nothing of but all they fiddle-faddles, and a-reading poetry to his daughter, and a-drawing of them little pictures? ’Tis no life for a man as calls hisself a man! How should he know ought about the likes of us *men*?’ and the expression with which the rest of the men acquiesced in this remark would have very much astonished the subject of their talk.

‘I thank Thee that I am not such a one as Mr. Eveleigh!’ was plainly written on most of their faces.

‘Though there’s some things as I envies

of him, and one's his money,' Joe Mutter had remarked in Angus' presence; and in his absence had added, 'and there's another as Gray envies of him, and that's the reading o' the poetry to the young woman! though for my part I'll not believe she's one o' them poetry sort—there's a look in her eye as don't hold with them sentimental ways, or my name's not Joe Mutter.'

If Angus had heard this opinion of Joe's, he could fully have endorsed it if he had chosen. He did envy Mr. Eveleigh his daughter's companionship; and he had certainly never seen a shade of sentiment in Nell's face. All the innocent candour of an affectionate, good-hearted child looked out of her young calm eyes, and about as much want of sentiment. 'She was very young, and had nobody else to speak to,' he had said to himself. And were not these very points in his favour the very reasons why he should be all

little cottage, and set her life amongst people and ways she knew nothing of, and condemned her to poverty and hardships of the existence of which she was absolutely ignorant, what could the end of it be but misery to both? As he thought this last and most sensible thought, a slight rustle caused him to turn his head, and there, close to him, stood the subject of his meditations.

For a moment she hesitated, and an unmistakable expression of surprise and vexation crossed her face. Then as Angus hastily rose up and bared his head, speechless in his surprise, the book he had not been reading rolled a little way towards Nell. She glanced down at it and saw it was the book she had lent him, and the vexation passed out of her

face, and she stepped forward to her accustomed seat. 'I thought nobody knew of this place but myself,' she said; 'but, tell me, how do you like it? I mean the book. I can't read out of doors, somehow,' she went on, not noticing Angus' awkwardness, or wishing to give him time to recover himself, 'but this is a glorious place for a think! I was coming to have one here. Am I interrupting you? May I rest a little?' And waiting for no permission, Nell quietly seated herself and looked up at Angus, thinking he might say something now.

CHAPTER XII.

BY THE ROCK.

NELL'S momentary hesitation had really arisen from a fear that she might be disturbing Gray in his reading. She was always glad to see him, and pleased to talk to him, and had no consciousness about her liking for him which gave her the faintest warning to conceal it. Her vexation arose simply from not being altogether pleased to find the place she had grown to consider her own special property invaded by another. This rock was a favourite resort of hers, and under its shadow she had passed many pleasant hours this summer. She had never taken Mr. Eveleigh there, for she had a little innocent satisfaction in believ-

ing herself to be alone in the secret of its whereabouts, and reserved it for a private retreat where she could be sure of solitude on the rare occasions when she and her father grew a little tired of each other's society. It did not occur to her for a moment to imagine that Gray had sought it out with any hope of meeting her there. Nor had he. He had discovered it long before Nell had ever seen it, and had often sought its peace and retirement when he wanted quiet to read. And it was the merest chance that Nell had never before encountered him there. The path (and it was a very bad one indeed, almost imperceptible) that led to the rock, had, in fact, been made by Angus himself. The rock was dry in winter, and shady in summer. In the winter he climbed to the top of it, in the summer he sat beneath it. From either position he looked straight out over the sea, with no interceptions to the view before him.

cliff went gradually and gently down in soft grassy undulations, interspersed with clumps of bracken and bramble. There was, therefore, no approach to the rock from the front, except by climbing the cliff as he had done. The path came from behind, except for a few yards from the spot, where it took a sharp turn to the side. It was when Nell took this turn that Angus heard her gown rustle, and he had looked round quickly enough to see her hesitation and surprise.

How vain and impossible in her actual presence seemed the dreams he had been indulging in! His mind was embarrassed and confused between the Nell of his imagination whose young heart it had seemed possible he might win if he tried, just because of its youth

and not from any merit of his own, and also because she had nobody else to speak to, and the actual Nell Eveleigh, so self-possessed, and superior, and calm, looking up to him with unsuspecting, friendly eyes, and expecting him to talk to her. What could he say, poor Angus! He turned his head away with a pained look in his eyes, and stooping to pick up his book, he prepared to relieve her of his presence there. Nell saw the movement, and scarcely giving him time to answer her first speech, she spoke again: 'You are not going, Mr. Gray. If you go I shall feel that I have driven you away. You were never thinking of going when I saw you as I came round that turn, leaning your head back on the rock, and looking so idle and comfortable! Sit down again, please—There,' and she deliberately pointed with her parasol to a bit of rock where he might be conveniently placed for conversation, and far enough off not to be

she was not driving him away, but simply sat down as she bade him. Nell looked at him curiously ; his silent obedience and evident confusion struck her oddly. The situation was awkward to her. He sat twisting his hat, which he had not replaced on his head, round and round, and looking intently at it, with his handsome head bent down, and the conscious flush still on his face, like a man convicted of some grave offence.

‘ Well ? ’ said Nell impatiently, breaking the silence for the third time. And this time he was able to answer.

‘ I was neither idle nor comfortable ! ’ he said, raising his head, and giving her an almost angry glance.

Nell laughed a little laugh of relief. ‘ I

had no means of knowing, you see. Is it such an offence to you to be supposed sometimes idle and comfortable? It is not like you to be offended,' she added, with sudden gravity, not reproaching him, but simply stating a fact.

'Offended! What by? I was only thinking how different people looks to what they are. I'm not one to take offence, miss!' answered Angus, quite as gravely.

'Miss what?' said Nell rather irrelevantly after a short pause, rather sharply too, and with a quick blush. The two lapses into vulgar speech, of which Angus was quite unconscious, grated on her, she scarcely knew why. This descent from her queenly position to childish impatience and unmistakable interest in his improvement, restored Gray to his right-minded self. All his embarrassment passed away as he regarded her with a smile of amusement, mixed with deprecation of his fault.

you said 'people looks!' and the grey eyes kindled indignantly.

'What can you expect?' he replied, humbly, adding with a touch of sadness, 'there's a deal o' difference in the ways o' speech of a lady like you, and the likes o' me.'

'What can I expect?' repeated Nell a little scornfully. 'A man who reads as much as you do, *knows* when he makes those vulgar mistakes quite well; I *wish* you wouldn't. You could help it quite well if you tried.'

'I shouldn't wonder if I could,' said Angus; 'it's the constant hearing o' that way o' speaking that gets a man into the way of it,' he added apologetically.

'I don't believe it! If I were to live all my life with people who spoke in that way,

it would make no difference to me,' pronounced Nell with much decision.

Angus coloured violently. 'Ye wouldn't be able to bear your life with people of our sort, if a wrong word here and there hurts ye like that,' he said, scarcely knowing what he said in his pained sense of the widening gulf between them. But Nell took his words simply as a statement of fact.

'I have been wondering lately, sometimes,' she said consideringly, 'whether I *could* bear it? It would be so odd to live amongst people who never understood; who were like children when you talked of things they were too young to take in! I wonder, too——' but she hesitated to say what she wondered, and looked at Angus with a sort of puzzle in her face, thinking of his mother and of his daily life.

'What is it ye wonder?' he asked gently, not far from divining her thought.

home,' and colouring with fear that she might have hurt his feelings, but never thinking of the flattering inference that he might draw from her words.

'It isn't, ye see, as it might be as if I was just living *amongst* them,' said Angus, explaining gravely; 'not as how it might be to yourself. I'm *one* of "these people," their ways o' thinking are my ways o' thinking (leastways, some o' them),' he added parenthetically and truthfully, while he held up his head proudly as he refused to admit his own superiority, 'and their ways o' speaking are, as ye were saying yourself, my ways o' speaking. My life is their life, and my troubles—some of them—are their troubles, and my pleasures——' Angus stopped for a moment,

he could not honestly say that his pleasures were their pleasures also. Nell was quick to seize her advantage.

‘You are forced to make exceptions, you see,’ she said triumphantly.

‘I don’t take no exception to them that likes a bit of a joke, and has no turn to books; it isn’t every man as chances on a captain to take an interest in making him a bit of a scholar like me—and it’s little enough o’ that I’ll be, after all! Sometimes I think a man’s none the better o’ it,’ said Angus, wandering a little from his point. ‘There’s Joe Mutter, now; you might have noticed Joe?’ he enquired of Nell.

‘No!’ she said shortly.

‘Well—Joe, he says “What’s the good o’ readin’? readin’ makes a man *that* stupid!” and it’s my belief he never opens a book from one year’s end to the other. And for all that, there’s no man I’d care to be left a week

wonder to me. And a better seaman and a truer friend than Joe you couldn't find if ye searched the world over. What the better would he be for a turn to books? he's content and happy.'

'Knowing no better,' interrupted Nell.

'What better can a man be than content? where's the use o' knowledge that leads a man to this?' said Angus, laying his hand emphatically on the book beside him.

'I think,' said Nell slowly, 'that that is the story of what seems to me to be a noble life; content and happiness are not everything.'

'And it's easy to see the poor fellow had neither the one nor the other; not that I've read much of it.'

‘But if you have read any of it you must see,’ said Nell, ‘that he puts truth above happiness, and that his discontent was not for himself. He wished that all the world should grow like himself dissatisfied, that they might grow in the end higher and holier; making goodness their highest happiness for the sake of goodness only, and seeking it for no selfish end. I call that a noble discontent, and I think that if great knowledge leads a man to that sort of contempt for content and secure belief, it is a higher and better end to attain than the common low sort of thing that represents to ignorant people present content and future happiness.’

‘Well,’ began Angus humbly, ‘ye’ll be looking at it different from me, as is natural. I make no doubt that when folks has everything to make them content and happy, they’ll not be thinking so much of what ye call the “common low sort of thing!” But,’

smattering of any kind o' learning, and consequently havn't the power o' settling things to their own satisfaction, by comparing one thing with another, and reasoning themselves up above the human nature that's in them by giving themselves up to an idea; it's my belief that a man who puts it in their way to learn to be discontented either with their lot here or their "low sort of future happiness," is going the wrong way to work to make a better of them. That's my meaning when I say, "Where's the use of knowledge?"' continued Angus, looking at Nell's face of earnest attention and deep interest with a wondering admiration. 'Ye're young to be bothering your head about such like things,' he said, almost involuntarily.

‘And yet,’ said Nell, taking no notice of his last remark, ‘you don’t despise knowledge yourself, and you don’t keep to one sort of books either, and you don’t seem afraid of disturbing your own beliefs.’

Angus laughed. ‘But then, ye see, it isn’t every man as can think to himself when he’s reading another man’s thoughts “that’s your way o’ thinking, but it don’t need to alter mine,”’ he said, quite unconscious that he was putting himself apart from his mates. ‘Ye should see some fellows over a book, ye would think they thought it was a living thing! and as for it’s being just the words of a man like themselves, *that* don’t never come to their minds; they’ll tell you quite serious-like, “but I saw that *in a book!*”. just as if because there it was printed down you need never think of denying a word of it. And yet, suppose you was to tell them the very same thing out of your own mouth, they’d

that were it.

Nell did not laugh ; ‘ the people ’ were a more benighted class than she had any idea of, evidently.

‘ And yet you said a little while ago that their ways of thinking were your ways of thinking ! ’ she said simply.

Angus coloured a little. ‘ Some o’ their ways. They’re agreed with me that “ noble ” is a wrong word to apply to any sort o’ discontent,’ he answered, jealous for their title to Nell’s respect ; ‘ the best o’ them that’s to say,’ he added, calling to mind some grumblers. ‘ Show me the man who has the courage to look his life in the face, and do the duty God Almighty puts in his way, and is thankful and grateful for any little pleasures and comforts that come alongside by

chance,—and I'll hold him higher than the man who goes out of his way to make himself and other folks miserable by insisting that content's low and patience unprofitable, and the God that's kept them pretty straight in their course nothing like as good a pilot as the grand human nature inside o' them!' Angus pulled himself up suddenly as he again encountered Nell's grey eyes fixed upon him, this time with an unwilling admiration.

'I'm getting hot!' he said, laughing; 'but I've small patience with that kind o' thing; it goes against common sense——'

'And commonplace!' said Nell; 'but you are practical, certainly. Supposing that the man who makes "himself and other folk miserable," as you say, should be just as convinced of his way of thinking as you are of yours, what then? Would you have him keep what he considers the truth to himself?'

he might happen to be wrong by chance,' said Angus, answering Nell's questions in the order she put them.

'And so might you—"by chance!"' quoted Nell, with the least shade of satire in her voice.

'That's true,' Angus acquiesced gravely; 'but leastways mine's a safer way o' looking at it.'

'Safer!' repeated Nell scornfully. 'I gave you credit for more courage!'

Gray smiled at her scorn.

'I wasn't so much thinking o' myself. But I'll know more, maybe, about the ways o' men like myself, than a man that takes them to be a different sort o' thing from what they are—grander like. I'm not saying

there mayn't be *some* that's fit to guide themselves—here and there a man or two,' he said doubtingly; 'but the most feel comfortable to look to the captain and take their orders. And if you had been under as many officers as me, you would maybe know there's few men but works heartier and better under a captain that takes a personal kind o' care o' them, and sees to their rewards and punishments with his own eyes. And the more he's above them, as ye may say—I'm meaning by that the better, the cleverer, and the juster he is—the more they think o' him. And it's my belief that supposing they believed him all that, and knew him for a first-rate seaman, and he was to put out in the worst weather ye could see, they'd go with him cheerful to a man, and trust him to bring them safe to port. A long voyage under a captain like that has a something in it that's like a long life under orders to a higher sort

galley punt o' his own build with himself . . . his own master, and nobody but himself to look to to manage it over as rough a sea as this life is to the most of us. He'd go down, to a certainty.'

Nell did not answer immediately. As Angus spoke her eyes had turned from him, and looked out over the sea with something wistful in their gaze. Might not she be wrecked in this punt of her own build 'that she was setting out in'? And could it be that the sea of her life would ever be otherwise than calm as this sea before her? Then her father's contemptuous and often-repeated 'good for the people' could not but cross her mind. And yet, and yet . . . sup-

posing rough weather came to her! She turned her eyes back to Angus. ‘“ Full of the calmest courage,”’ she repeated to herself, with a sense of trust and confidence that the half-protecting love she had from a child bestowed on her father had never called forth.

‘It’s good to be so sure,’ she said this time, meaning no irony, but with a feeling of some envy.

But Gray misunderstood her. He thought she was dismissing the subject with a contemptuous reference to his pig-headedness.

‘Maybe you’re right,’ he said humbly; ‘I’m hard to turn. But a man should know his own mind at my time o’ life!’


‘Why?’ said Nell, with some astonishment, coming down at once from higher considerations, ‘is that so far advanced? How old are you?’

‘Old enough to know my own mind, I’m

bered was old of her age, and had never lived with young people, 'My father is five or six-and-forty, and I am not sure that he would like to be called old. Twenty-eight is not so old. And you just look about the same age as everybody else. I mean as most men. But still—yes, you ought to know your own mind. I think I know mine about most things, and I am—let me see how much—eleven years younger. Eleven years *is* a long time !'

Angus grew very red as her words suggested again his vain hopes and folly. 'It ought to bring a man some sense !' he said, rising up and taking out his watch ; 'it's time I was going.'

Nell did not ask him to stay, but she



said, 'You will finish the book and bring it to me? And you can have any others you like, you know. Perhaps some that you will like better, and some day we can have another talk about them?'

Angus's 'sense' deserted him, in spite of his eight-and-twenty years. 'Maybe I might chance to find ye here some other day?' he said eagerly.

'Yes,' said Nell calmly, not at all surprised that he should be glad of a person to talk to who was more understanding than the people he lived amongst, 'I often come here. Or you might come to the cottage. Good-bye.' And she nodded kindly, and smiled at him as he turned away.

CHAPTER XIII.

‘IT’S GOOD TO BE SURE.’

‘I SAW Gray to-day, papa,’ began Nell that evening after dinner, ‘and he said——’

‘Ah!’ said Mr. Eveleigh, ‘Gray’s sayings are always so worth repeating! Well, what did he say?’

‘Why do you sneer at him, papa? You admit yourself that he is very superior.’

‘Very superiorly good-looking. Yes, I do admit that.’

‘It was about that book I lent him that he was talking, and he said——’

‘Spare me, my dear, spare me at least till I have digested my dinner. “Well, sir, I cannot say honest-like that that’s *my* way

o’ thinkin’. I’m not sayin’ mine’s the right way . . . but may happen *he’s* in the wrong, sir ?” quoted Mr. Eveleigh, exaggerating the slight drawl with which Gray sometimes spoke. ‘He is pig-headed, my dear Nell, as ignorant persons are apt to be.’

‘But you would not think any the better of him if he had no opinions of his own ?’

‘I should think it more modest of him if he entirely mistrusted his own opinions, as a man who is conscious of his ignorance ought to do. But, as I said before, it goes with ignorance to be positive,’ repeated Mr. Eveleigh.

‘He is not exactly positive, he is only sure of his own mind,’ said Nell, thinking of Angus and his modest firmness.

‘That’s to say that he has prejudices and beliefs that he holds to because he does not know enough to realise that he knows nothing—that we all know nothing—and that

then his "way o' thinkin'" is the right way; but as that is also an open question, he has no right to be so sure of it.'

'It's good to be sure!' said Nell gravely, regarding her father with her earnest serious eyes. 'I wish I was an ignorant person,' she added with a sigh.

Mr. Eveleigh laughed.

'I *do*, really,' she said quite gravely, in perfect good faith.

Then her father leant back in his chair and laughed again, a low but thoroughly hearty laugh. Nell looked at him with some surprise till the meaning of the amused twinkle in his eyes dawned on her. She coloured a little.

'You mean that I need not wish it be-

cause . . . Well, now I can’t *honestly* say that’s my “way of thinking,”” she quoted in her turn, with a perfectly good-humoured smile.

‘My little one, you are the dearest little girl in the world, and better company than if you had the wisdom of Solomon,’ said Mr. Eveleigh, soothingly.

‘I did not say I was wise. I said I was not ignorant. I know a good deal, papa, really ; though I can neither play nor paint,’ she said with some positiveness.

‘Ah ! Nell, I never could understand how you came to be so inartistic. And yet you have a critical turn that has merit. You judged your father, little one, long ago.’

‘Oh, papa !’ exclaimed the girl, blushing painfully, and the tears starting to her eyes, ‘when you *know* that I think you could do *anything* you choose to do.’


‘You think my failures proceed from weakness of will ?’ asked her father, a slight

son ?' he asked again, leaning forward with an air of mock deprecation and desire for information.

'You try so many things,' began Nell reluctantly, taking his questions seriously, and——

'Finish so few, eh? Evidently you *do* know a great deal, my child. Well, nobody who looks at you attentively will be likely to imagine you have inherited my "want of purpose." Is not that the expression ?'

Nell looked at him doubtfully. There was a mocking smile hovering about his mouth which vanished entirely as he added, 'And you shall not suffer from it, darling. It shall never interfere with your life, or spoil your happiness in any way.'



‘That,’ said Nell smiling, and with a little sparkle in her eyes, ‘is also an open question. You have no right to be so sure of what might happen. It is a sign of ignorance to be positive ;’ and as her father did not reply as she expected, but looked at her gravely, and said very seriously, without a vestige of playfulness, ‘Don’t set up a will of your own, little one ; don’t, for God’s sake don’t, or, or—’ and stopped, and muttered to himself.

Nell burst out impatiently, ‘You are not nice to-night, papa ; you laugh at me, and frown at me, and mutter cross things——’

Mr. Eveleigh’s face was suddenly whitened by some violent emotion, whether of pain or anger, Nell could not tell. She held the words suspended on her lips of penitence for her little fretful outburst, when her father, to her surprise, spoke again in his usual every-day tone, ‘You have alarmed me

voice, and the timidity of a child that has been suddenly frightened ; and he criticised her choice, not without some surprise at it, and a quick recollection that he had not been sorry to be relieved of the trouble of choosing for her when she suggested that she was old enough to choose for herself.

‘ How many boxes have you had since we came here ? ’ he asked.

‘ Three, I think. They are all books that I have heard you refer to. I wanted . . . ’ Nell hesitated.

‘ I can’t think what you wanted with such books as these, I must say. Pray explain,’ said Mr. Eveleigh sarcastically.

Now Nell, as has been said, had a temper that was easily roused. This was perhaps

the first time in her life that her father had been as she put it 'not nice' to her. Nevertheless, her love for him was great, and the unwonted disagreeableness of so calm and placid a person as her father had, she considered, probably some physical cause. She was led to this conclusion partly by the help of a recollection of the reasons for bad temper set forth by some of her philosophers, and also by the extra paleness of Mr. Eveleigh's always pale face.

'Papa, dear,' said Nell, thinking hard of all the dishes of which they had partaken, 'which of them was bad for you? It ought not to be ordered again.'

'I don't suppose any of them would do *me* any harm; but a man of my age is a very different person from a young girl like you,' answered Mr. Eveleigh referring to the books, and smiling in spite of himself at Nell's solicitude on his behalf.

and the landlady who promised she would put nobody else into the room if we took the double-bedded one? Why, that is a year ago! only think—a year ago,’ repeated Nell musingly.

Mr. Eveleigh opened bewildered eyes, and stared at his daughter. ‘My dear Nell, what in the name of wonder are we talking about?’ he asked.

‘Oh, yes! to be sure,’ said Nell, recalled to the present by the question. ‘Which of them was it, dear?’ she asked with concern, returning to the dishes.

‘Which of what? Are we talking of those precious books of yours, or are we not?’

Now it was Nell’s turn to stare, and after



doing so for a second, she leant back in her chair, and went into a fit of childish merriment. 'Your—your—your poor gas—gas—gas!' but she gave it up, and laughed again.

'My poor gas?' repeated Mr. Eveleigh. 'Gas? there isn't a burner in the house; the child's mad!'

'Gastric!' gasped Nell, in vain trying to stop herself.

'Gastric—fever? eh? Juice?—ah! I see! Not "nice" fem. for cross! charitable explanation, "bilious!" Thank you my dear; may I never be more hardly judged!' and Mr. Eveleigh laughed, too; and then becoming suddenly grave, he said tenderly: 'I can never be cross to you, my Nell.'

Nell recovered herself. 'Yes!' she asserted, 'you *were*. But as you didn't mean to be, I don't mind it much; and you are quite sure that you are not——'

'Bilious? quite sure. I think I may say

‘Poor Liaston!’ ejaculated Mr. Eveleigh.

‘And if she is not good enough, you can afford a better,’ continued Nell.

‘But I like Moore; she suits us, and knows our ways,’ said Mr. Eveleigh.


‘Then don’t grumble, papa! I am never sorry for people if it is their own fault that they are uncomfortable,’ asserted Nell.

Mr. Eveleigh smiled rather sadly. ‘How old are you, Nell?’ he asked.

‘I shall be eighteen in two months,’ she replied.

‘Then you are seventeen; why couldn’t you say seventeen? Do the years pass so slowly?’

‘No! but nearly eighteen is not the same as seventeen. Why did you ask, papa?’



‘I was thinking that in ten years perhaps you might not be so severe.’

Nell coloured. ‘I shall *never* be as tolerant and indifferent and good-tempered as you, dear, if I live to be a hundred. But about those books. I never thought you would object; I wanted——’ again she hesitated, but this time her father said gently :

‘Tell me, child; I like you to tell me everything.’

‘I wanted to read for myself some of the writers I have heard you quote. I wanted to see whether they did *really* hold the opinions they are said to hold in some of the newspapers and magazines you take in. I wanted to see whether it was true that all men who know much believe little——’

‘Wait a moment, child!’ interrupted Mr. Eveleigh. ‘Was that last suggestion one of my making?’

‘Yes, papa; and I am sorry to say that

like you !' said Mr. Eveleigh, looking much vexed.

' Perhaps you never said it as I have said it—I don't remember ; but you have implied it often and often,' insisted Nell.

' Nell, I must have meant that they did not understand belief as—as Moore understands it ; that is all. Nell——'

' Yes, papa !'

' Don't you think at seventeen that you might suspend your judgment, and turn your attention to less grave and difficult subjects than religion and philosophy ?'

' So I do ; but I take the greatest interest in these. And they are so mixed up with all the other things : with science, and progress, and—and—the End of Ends !'

▲ ▲

Mr. Eveleigh groaned. ‘My poor little girl! No wonder she wished she was an ignorant person! We must have some good novels down at once,’ he added, thinking how he could undo the harm he had carelessly done.

‘Novels?’ exclaimed Nell scornfully; ‘and you have always told me that you would rather I read none. I *have* read none, but I have read reviews of them; they seem such a foolish waste of time.’

‘They will put all this nonsense out of your head, but——’ He stopped, for he was not sure whether they might not put worse nonsense into it; which evil was the worst he could not quite make up his mind at the moment.

‘I have a good memory, papa! a love story won’t put other thoughts out of my head. If there was only something I could *do*. If I could live a hard-working life for a

as he realised for the first time that however he might shape the outward course of her life, he was losing—perhaps had lost—all influence over her thoughts and longings and aspirations. The comfort of all his life would be spoilt if she should give herself up to absorbing speculations, or were to take up some of the prevailing hobbies of the women of the day, and insist on having a career. At all risks he must lead her back to thoughts and interests more in accordance with her youth and her position. But could he? He sat looking at her, and noticing—as he had never noticed before—the firm lines of her beautiful mouth and chin; the look of grave earnestness, softening the audacity and presumption of her extreme

youth, that lay deep in her clear eyes ; the breadth and want of sentiment that seemed to belong to her nature, marking itself outwardly on the broad, fair, open forehead ; the largeness of her sympathies, the desire to be fair and to ‘judge for herself,’ typified by the absence of that fragile grace of early girlhood, by the noble pose of the head and whole figure, and by her stately assured movements ; and lastly, the fire of energy and determination that showed in the occasional flash that lit up her whole face with the beauty of enthusiasm and possibly of latent passion. Was this a girl to lay her life and its ordering patiently in the hands of another ? But she loved him, of that he was certain ; and grand natures were proverbially prone to great sacrifices of self. There was hope yet ! The moody gaze of the father softened as this hope of turning his daughter’s character to good account in his own

best to sneer. But Nell was too earnest to notice it.

‘That’s just what I don’t know. Is there nothing I could do to be of use to anybody?’

‘Well, since you ask me seriously, you might give your mind more to the ordering of the dinner,’ he answered.

Nell thought a moment, then she replied: ‘I would, papa, *if* it was necessary ; but it is not necessary. You would miss your occasional little interviews and consultations with Moore when my ideas fail me, and as I said before, if you are not satisfied with her it is not a question of expense. Think again, papa ; my talents do not specially lie in that line, it seems to me.’

‘Well, perhaps I *should* miss my occa-

sional interviews on the interesting subject of the event of the day ; I will think about it. Meantime, promise me to leave those books alone for the present. You will admit that you owe some respect to your father’s wishes in this matter,’ he said, assuming all the authority of his position because he was doubtful of his power.

But Nell answered readily. ‘Of course I will ! to tell the truth, I am tired of them a little. But I am wrong, and so are you, papa. Better to face a thing out, and settle it one way or another. One thing is evident, dear ; you put your daughter and “the people,” for whom you always say the beaten tracks are the safest, on the same level ! I had you *there*, my own dear daddy !’ and Nell laughed, though her colour was high, and there was a flash of something like anger in her eyes.

Mr. Eveleigh’s pale face flushed a little.

nonsense one is beguiled into talking on a favourable opportunity ! My daughter ranks always first in my thoughts, as you ought to know.'


This speech, accompanied by a look of hurt affection, melted Nell. She came and put her arms round his neck and kissed him ; and so ended the first approach to dissension that had yet arisen between her and her father.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CHANGE OF TREATMENT.

MR. EVELEIGH was troubled by it nevertheless, and as he held up his book before him that evening he meditated on it. He saw that he had made a mistake somehow in the direction of Nell's education, but he did not very clearly see how to remedy it. His own ideas were liberal in the extreme with regard to everything speculative, conservative to the last degree with regard to everything practical. It did not please him that Nell should be beginning to think for herself and judge for herself, while nevertheless his theory had been to teach her to take broad views of every subject; and his own opinions trans-

great idea had been to make Nell thoroughly companionable ; and a mawkish sentimental credulous girl, shocked at every idea beyond her own commonplace received notions, would have been intolerable to him as a companion. He had thought it well to enlarge her mind by giving her an occasional inkling of the direction and advancement of thought, diluting the information, as he supposed, just enough to make it only a wholesome stimulant to her young and enquiring mind. But perhaps it was more difficult than he thought in continued intercourse to be always as careful with regard to the direction of the topics suitable to another and a younger mind as he ought to have been ; or perhaps Nell's intelligence had been developed more quickly



than he had imagined it could be. At all events, it is certain that, while wishing to give her a little more latitude of thought than most girls were allowed, he had never had an intention of taking from her the faith of the traditions he honestly believed to be so good for 'the people' and for women. And it had never occurred to him that her interest in the deep problems he himself passed over so contentedly and lightly with the careless admission that everything was an 'open question,' would be great enough to make her take to speculative literature on her own account; or that her belief in his power of representing the thoughts of another man should be so weak as to make her wish to 'see for herself' what the man really meant. But that it had been so was now too evident to him. And the inevitable result was anything but what he could have wished. To have a daughter who at eighteen had arrived

and, as Mr. Eveleigh considered, unresolvable, subjects, obviously looked upon herself as a learned woman, and a competent judge of them, was a calamity that he had never expected to befall him. He, poor man, had wished to accomplish the impossible. Just as Angus Gray had explained to his mother that Miss Eveleigh wished the people to know their place, and yet be on an intellectual and moral equality with their betters, so had Mr. Eveleigh wished his daughter to be liberal-minded, inquiring, intelligent, and in no way behind the age, and yet to keep her childish beliefs, her trustingness, and her careless happiness ; taking her views of life and her opinions from his views and opinions, modified to suit her age and sex ; the rules to

guide her conduct being left to the inspiration of nature, and the old reasons for 'being good' that her mother had conscientiously instilled into her early youth, seasoned with a more than usually deep love for her father which should induce her to look upon obedience to his very easy rule as the pleasure as well as the duty of her life. And now she said that it was 'an open question' whether her father's weakness of will might not spoil her life. Mr. Eveleigh at this point of his meditations laughed to himself. Nell might be a good judge of the chances of a hereafter, or of nothingness beyond this life, but she was on the face of it a poor judge of character. Horace Eveleigh, a man without a backbone! 'Horace!' he repeated, saying over to himself his Christian name as if it were a new one, and the current of his thoughts changing somewhat. How long it was since anybody had called him by his

he asked himself, with a discontent that he had not allowed himself to feel since the death of his wife. Already was not Nell's restless desire for 'something to do' a symptom of the imperious rebellion against dulness and loneliness from which no age (except very old age) is safe. It was all that was left to him nevertheless, and he must cling to it. To go into the world again and expose himself to its trials and temptations would be to expose himself also to the repetition in all probability of the suffering that was past. The calm he had attained to he must keep at all costs. Nell was his daughter, and born to be the compensation for all other losses, and Nell's mission in life must be to minister to this calm happiness at the expense of her own if need be. But it need *not* be. She should

be happy. He would find some outlet to the restless activity of her mind more wholesome, if less intellectual, than the private studies she had been indulging in. She was truth itself, and would keep her promise to abstain from them faithfully. Meantime . . . what was there for her to do? She took an interest, apparently real, in the people; that might safely be encouraged. There was no harm, and no disagreeable result to himself would follow, if she chose to be a 'Lady Bountiful.' Curiously enough, she did not seem to have much turn for almsgiving. She had told him, by the way, that he ought not to have offered Gray a sovereign. Ah! . . . There was Gray, and his old mother. Surely, thought Mr. Eveleigh, that was a safe interest. He would endeavour to abstain from sneering at the crude notions of this son of the people whom his daughter delighted to honour. Perhaps after all his notions were the antidote


‘Nell,’ he said, breaking the silence that had fallen between them, ‘I daresay Gray *has* some opinions worth hearing?’

‘Yes,’ said Nell, looking up, quite unconscious of the meaning of the watchful look her father bent on her, ‘but you wouldn’t let me tell you.’

Mr. Eveleigh was vexed with himself for having allowed himself to try whether the sudden mention of the man’s name would bring out any expression of interest stronger than he would have liked, and pleased at his disappointment at the same time.

‘At all events,’ he said, with the flush on his face that his momentary and almost involuntary doubt of the child had called forth,

‘At all events they are honest ones. I



could trust that man with my life if it was in his power !' he exclaimed, wishing to make the *amende*, vaguely aware of some prophetic instinct in a remark that was much too strong for the occasion, and struggling against the meaning it would take to his own consciousness.

'Yes,' said Nell, just as quietly as she had before spoken, 'and so could I. I am glad you do him justice, papa, though he bores you a little.'

'And I don't see any reason why you should not talk to him when you like, if it interests you——'

'And *where* I like, I suppose, as long as it isn't in your presence and is beyond your hearing, you cynical old misanthrope !' said Nell, laughing.

Mr. Eveleigh laughed too. Nell's perfect unconsciousness of any reason why she should not be interested in Angus Gray, and like to

Nell.'

There was a certain wistfulness and perplexity in her father's face as he made this promise that made the girl feel that she had in some way distressed him otherwise than by her choice of books.

'I am not dull, papa. Don't think it is that,' she said, remembering occasions on which her father had seemed solicitous on this point. 'There are plenty of other sorts of books, and there are always the newspapers——'

'But, Nell, I don't care for you to read the newspapers,' said her father, doubtfully. 'What part of them do you read?'

'Oh! the speeches. But I don't read your "Times" very often. Mr. Farley lends

me a weekly paper he takes in, and tells me the things to read he thinks I shall be interested in. Then there are the strikes and the conferences, and the demonstrations. I read those because Mr. Farley likes to talk about them. Sometimes the things they say at the "mass meetings" are a little dull,' said Nell, with a faint accent of regret in her voice.

'Ah !' said Mr. Eveleigh, "the time will come when the pampered, over-opulent, self-indulgent, indifferent, easy-going, pleasure-seeking upper classes will have to listen to the voice of men who refuse to have their wages taken from them and called rent, or to vest in individuals all the profit created by their own labour." Is that the kind of thing ?'

Nell laughed.

'There's a sameness about what they say, but then there's a sameness about what they want. And, somehow, when I read about

than their way, and go to them and tell it to them, and persuade them to follow me. Do you know, papa, it's all very well to laugh, but it is *quite true* what they say about its being a shame that the one half of the people should slave for the glorification of the other half! I am not at all sure that if I were a man what I should like best of all to do would not be to be the leader of a general rising!' As she spoke the colour flushed into her cheeks, and her eyes sparkled.

Mr. Eveleigh looked at her in amazed consternation for a moment. Then he began to laugh with the same intense amusement as when she had told him seriously that she wished she was an ignorant person.

'I am afraid, my little one, you would find

yourself like the Scotch ghost, "just daidlin' about by yersel" instead of the leader of a "general rising"! The people of the nineteenth century have more sense than they get credit for, and would never follow even you! Nell, what a mercy to me that you are not a boy! Good heavens! Fancy a son of mine a demagogue!' and Mr. Eveleigh shuddered with unfeigned disgust.

'Does your friend Gray hold forth upon the wants of the people?' he asked, as Nell was silent, not from any feeling of resentment at her father's want of sympathy with her enthusiasm, but simply from a sense of the folly of expecting sympathy from him on such a subject.

'On the contrary. I can't persuade him that they want anything. He is quite contented!' she answered with some disdain in her voice.

'So, then, it is old Farley who thirsts for my blood amongst other people's!'

being behind-hand with his rent. If he had no rent to pay he would have one satisfaction the less. He's a dear old man,' said Nell, leaving her heroics and coming down to actuality, 'and as honest and upright as the day !'

'Yes—a decent old fellow. Who is his landlord ?' asked Mr. Eveleigh.

'Oh !' said Nell, 'that reminds me ! They are coming home. I meant to tell you.'

'Who are they ? I don't know to whom you refer,' answered Mr. Eveleigh, bewildered.

'Old Farley's landlord and his sister. You remember that pretty old place that we stopped to look at once beyond the valley. The name is Curgenwen.—I mean the name of the people. The place, I think, is called

Tremore. Farley is fond of talking about them. He has no personal spite at landlords, and seems to like his. Miss Curgenwen is a half-sister of Mr. Curgenwen's, he says, and much younger. I fancy the master of Tremore is an old bachelor.'

'Why, Nell, you are becoming a gossip as well as a communist!' said Mr. Eveleigh, not feeling much interested.

'I was only wondering whether perhaps Miss Curgenwen might not be a little different from the ladies of Liaston,' said the girl, looking a little wistfully at her father.

'You mean,' said Mr. Eveleigh, after a moment's pause, 'that if she proves so you might like to make her acquaintance?'

Nell coloured; she did not wish her father to think that she disliked their lonely life, but she had thought once or twice with some interest of Miss Curgenwen.

'I should like to know a nice *woman*,

‘Then I hope she will be “nice,” my darling,’ said Mr. Eveleigh, tenderly, with a complete revelation coming to him of the need of his daughter for a woman-companion, that had been dawning on him during their conversation, and a feeling of satisfaction that he might be able to indulge her in this desire without bringing upon himself the visits of a class of women like the ladies of Liaston. For it did not occur to him to doubt that Mr. and Miss Curgenwen could be of a different class from himself and his daughter ; and he found himself honestly hoping that the lady would prove to be a person whom he might not object to as an acquaintance for Nell.

CHAPTER XV.

OLD FARLEY.

FOR about a week after this conversation with Ellinor in which his confidence in the success of his plans for her had been a little shaken, Mr. Eveleigh exerted himself to interest and amuse her in various ways. He kept her on one pretence or another a good deal with himself; took long walks with her which Nell thoroughly enjoyed; and altogether devoted himself to her. This was all very pleasant for a day or two. After that there came over both father and daughter a feeling that the effort to be always interested in one another, and always as it were on the watch to keep each

of what she would like required a continuous exertion that he was not prepared to keep up. What he had hitherto wished had been that Nell should be there when he wanted to talk, and able to respond intelligently when he did talk. But she had never up to this time occupied all his attention, or in any way been a hindrance to the prosecution of his own hobbies—and fond as Nell was of her father, there was not even to her unmitigated pleasure in always being with him. The delightful sense of perfect freedom seemed to be passing out of their lives. Hitherto, they had been together or apart as their fancy had pleased—Nell never feeling herself in the way if she chose to be with her father, Mr. Eveleigh for the most

part taking not much heed of her occupations, and going on with his own quite placidly whether she appeared to interest herself in them or not. He was trying a different experiment now, and it was not proving altogether successful. A little frown would show itself on Nell's forehead when he asked her too often in one day what she was reading ; and a slight expression of weariness sometimes made the corners of her mouth droop when she had for too many hours been patiently following his endeavours to turn her mind to what he was beginning to consider suitable subjects for a young girl's mind to occupy itself with. He wearied of the subjects himself as fast as Nell. But an end came naturally to this short and vain attempt to put Nell back in her proper place. Mr. Eveleigh had sent for specimens of art needlework, and produced them one day with a sort of apology,

cushions and sofa blankets in the first stages of artistic developments, a rather foolish smile upon his lips, and a good deal of anxiety in his eyes, the meaning of the devotion of the week to her interests and occupations burst upon Nell. Her lips parted and her eyes opened for a moment in wonder till the absurdity of the situation struck her, and she began to laugh softly, half turning away for fear of vexing her father. But Mr. Eveleigh, who in a general way was quicker to see the ridiculous than his daughter, was very much in earnest. He deposited the things in a heap on the table, and searched amongst them for the prettiest he could find. Nell by this time had turned her back completely to him, and

her shoulders were undeniably shaking. But he never noticed her, till having tumbled over the things he came to a piece of brown canvas on which the half of a trail of Cape jessamine was embroidered. It was really pretty, and caught his artistic eye in a moment. He seized it and held it up triumphantly in front of him, and called to Nell to admire. She smothered her mirth and turned obediently ; but the sight was too much for her. Mr. Eveleigh, in his position of showman, looking down on the needlework with his head first on one side and then on the other, was too absurdly ridiculous. She gave a little burst of laughter that she could not have helped to save her life. Then he looked up at her. He flushed awkwardly for a moment, and still held the work in front of him, uncertain whether to be angry or not. But Nell's convulsed face overcame him. Flinging the thing aside, he dropped into an

as soon as he could speak. 'Go your own way. Be a demagogue, or a philosopher, or both, or anything you like. Life won't be worth having if we are to bore each other as we have done for a week, will it, little one?'

Nell became suddenly serious.

'I will never *be* anything, dear, that you don't like me to be,' she said, going up to the table, and turning over the needlework, 'but I can't help what I *think*, and this won't hinder me, nor making me read stupid stories that I hate and poetry that is not the least like life. And you will just get to hate me if you let me be always an interruption to what you like to do yourself. I don't believe you have drawn a stroke for a week!'

‘No, no—that’s true. Well, Nell, I don’t know what you’ll come to. But as long as you can laugh like that—and I have no doubt you will tire of philosophy, and you will never have the chance of heading a revolution—and so——’

‘And so we’ll just put back our ways of living to what they were before. I am sure we were very happy!’ said Nell with intense relief.


‘Yes,’ said her father, ‘we *were*! But I can’t put you back, it appears. My little Nell is vanishing away!’

There was no mirth in her father’s smile this time as he looked at her.

Nell coloured all over her face and neck and the tears rushed to her eyes. She went to him and knelt down by his chair, and put her head on his shoulder.

‘Always the same Nell to you, dear, *always*!’ she said softly.

REMARK. SHE HAD NOT HAD ONE SOLITARY WALK.
She had not even had time to think of Angus Gray and his higher education. She had almost forgotten about Miss Curgenwen's coming; and knowing her father's impatience with such men as old Farley, she had never thought of taking him to the farm in 'the valley'—as she would persist in calling the landslip on the Liaston side of which the farm lay. Therefore, when on the day after the relinquishment of his unsuccessful efforts, Mr. Eveleigh shut himself into his painting room with a sigh of relief, having told Nell that he was not much inclined for a long walk, and asked her if she would mind going alone, to which she had replied with a laugh, and an assurance that she had had quite too much of his company lately, she set off for the farm with the deliberate in-



tention of hearing from old Farley all there was to hear of the people in whose coming she had begun to take a vague interest. The farm lay about half a mile beyond the Eveleighs' cottage. Farley was leaning up against his door-post smoking his pipe as Nell came in sight, and his kindly face brightened visibly at the girl's approach.

'Come away, missy, come away ! I'm main glad to see ye,' he said, preceding her into the house place and setting a chair for her by the fire, and depositing his broad capacious person in an arm-chair opposite her.

'Where's Miss Farley ?' said Nell, looking round the empty room as she seated herself.

'Oh ! her be gone to town—we'll can have "our cracks," as that upsetting old woman Gray would say, afore she'll be any where anigh comin' home. Her's a mighty gossip is my Bess—but a good woman, Miss

a settle by his chair, and began to give Nell a sort of *résumé* of its contents.

‘There’s a grand struggle a comin’ on in the North. . . Here’s a man as states as they’ve got a rise in so many years from thirteen shillings a week to twenty-two and thirty shillings, by the unions. . . And here’s a man as objects to an honest, hard-working field labourer being mentioned in the same breath as one o’ them “brainless swells.” Well now, Miss Nell, between you an’ me, there’s not a more vacant-minded fool as ever was born into this world than one o’ my own labourers, which I won’t say more nor his name’s Tom, and an honest and hard-working creature, too. Now what *I* say is, fair’s fair. Here’s a fool, and there’s a fool. As far as I’m concerned Tom

the fool as works, and we'll say—just for example - like, Miss Nell, nought more,' said old Farley, interrupting himself to wink at Nell and give a wicked little laugh—'Chudleigh the fool, as is a swell, ain't one no worse nor t'other. It don't make Tom no better company to me that he's honest an' works. Chudleigh—always for the sake of example, missy,—Chudleigh's honest—as well. It don't disgrace Tom to my thinking to mention 'em in the same breath !'

Nell laughed. 'Tom might be proud !' she said.

'Tom's a fool—very like he'd be proud. . . And here's a man as 'll please *you*, missy. *He* don't see no reason why there shouldn't come a time when everybody 'll prefer "good taste," an' everybody's house 'll be a kind o' a small gallery o' art and science. My Bess 'll be glad to be safe out o' the way afore that day, I'm thinkin'. *She* don't see no good o'

‘ That’s just what I was telling Mrs. Gray ! ’ said Nell, with a little flush of annoyed recollection, ‘ but she didn’t understand. ’

‘ Oh ! as for that, I’ve little opinion of *that* old woman’s intellects ! ’ said Farley, with some acrimony. ‘ Talk to her now o’ her mother the “ leddy,” and her grandfather “ the laird ! ” That’s what she’ll be capable o’, nought else. For the matter o’ that I ne’er saw a womanfolk but yerself, missy, as could talk a bit o’ sense. . . Here’s another man now as goes as far as to say as there’s no chance o’ makin’ a better o’ old England as long as there’s queen or king, or aught but a republic. Now I *don’t* hold wi’ him. Do *you*, now, Miss Nell ? ’

But Nell was unprepared to commit her-



self to a decided opinion. She held out her hand for the paper, which the old man handed to her.

‘You’ve torn the half of it off again, Mr. Farley,’ said Nell, suspiciously.

A little bright spot of colour came into his brown cheeks.

‘Them things was not to say just very interesting on that side o’ the paper, missy—Bess wanted a bit to light the fire wi’ this morn, an’ I just up and give it her. ’Twas handy like.’


‘It’s often “handy-like” evidently,’ said Nell unbelieving, but grateful; ‘and I dare say, as you say, it wasn’t interesting.’

‘Never a bit, missy—’tis no loss no ways. And me never tellin’ ye the news!’ he said, hastily changing the subject.

‘Lord! Miss Ava, how ye startle a body!’ he exclaimed immediately in almost the same breath, but with an entire change of voice and

farmer and his visitor before they became aware of her presence.

‘Not but what I’m always pleased to see you, Miss Ava, as I’ve known since you was that high,’ he added more pleasantly, holding out his right hand to the lady, and his left about three feet from the floor. She took the extended hand and looked kindly at the farmer who returned the look not unkindly, but without any of the beaming welcome he always bestowed on Nell Eveleigh, whom he had only known for a few months. Nell noticed this in spite of a little quickening of her pulses at the sight of the Miss Curgenwen she had so often lately speculated about; and she wondered at it till the cold unsympathetic tone of the lady’s clear voice



fell on her ears ; ‘ I am sorry I startled you, Farley. You were not nervous the last time I was at home ! I should not have come to see you again so soon, but I find we want another maid in the house, I came to speak to your sister about one. I suppose she is not at home, and if you are engaged . . . ’ here she turned, and acknowledged Nell’s presence by a slight bend of her graceful head.

‘ It’s Miss Ava, missy, as I’ve often tell’t ye about, and this is the young lady as I was telling *you* about, Miss Ava—Miss Nell Eveleigh, daughter to Mr. Eveleigh, an’ wi’ more sense in her bonnie young head than most women folks has in their whole body, meaning no offence, Miss Ava ! ’ There was something defiant in the way in which the farmer glanced up into his visitor’s face, but she did not notice it ; at least it did not offend her.

sociable ones.' she added, with a gracious condescension she was well used to exercising, pleased with Nell's appearance and in her secret heart much surprised at it.

Nell politely hoped they might be with a coldness that astonished herself, and yet she could not feel that she was exactly disappointed, unless it was that she had expected to find Miss Curgenwen a younger woman—a more beautiful woman she could not well have been, and that in itself was some satisfaction to Nell. It was not beauty that the face so nearly on a level with her own wanted, but warmth and life. To some people its sweet repose might have been attractive. But it might also have been the consciousness of her own beauty that gave her that

calmly placid, contented, and slightly aggravating look of superiority, as of a thing taken for granted and indisputable. She sat down in Farley's chair while the farmer stood by the table, and discoursed to Nell in an easy pleasant way of the good luck it was for herself to have neighbours at all, and how glad she would be if she and her brother might make their acquaintance very soon.

‘I find Liaston too far off to be of much use in the way of society, while I am at Tremore,’ she said, quietly ignoring the fact that the Eveleighs’ cottage was very nearly as far.

‘An’ not to say much to your taste neither, Miss Ava,’ said Farley grimly.

She looked up at him with a momentary displeasure. Then she smiled and said apologetically to Nell, ‘Farley has known me all my life, as he told you when I came in.’

‘An’ if I’d only known ye but yesterday,

hundred times. Look at Mr. Ralph ! sure he's what ye may call a popular man now, and for why ? *He* don't hold up *his* head so as the Liaston folks can't see but the end of his nose !'

Instead of being angry as Nell fully expected, Miss Curgenwen actually laughed.

'Poor Ralph ! how could he, Farley ! Poor Ralph's nose !'

At this Farley's grimness and disagreeableness melted a little, and Nell began to like Miss Curgenwen better. She saw that she treated the farmer somewhat as if he were a favourite and much indulged servant, who in consideration of his known worth and affection, might take what liberties he pleased in speaking his mind. Farley himself

seemed relieved of some lurking suspicion of Ava which Nell could not quite understand. The fact was, that the farmer had been uncertain how Miss Curgenwen would treat his favourite Nell, and had been ready and willing to resent any indignity that Miss Curgenwen might choose to put upon her.

‘Well, it don’t naturally turn up, that’s certain!’ he said, referring to Mr. Curgenwen’s nose.

This was a direction of the conversation in which Nell could take neither part nor interest, and she rose up to go. As Miss Curgenwen made no sign of departing also, Farley made no objection, only saying a little wistfully,

‘Ye’ll not be so long in bringin’ back the paper?’

Miss Curgenwen held out her hand with


Eveleigh. She made no pretence of not knowing where the cottage was, or of ignorance of the fact that Nell lived alone with her father. She had quite taken in the whole history of the Eveleighs, as Farley and his sister understood it, and she had listened not without interest to it. Farley's doubt of her and her intentions with regard to visiting Nell had been caused by her silence, when he suggested that she would have no excuse for turning up her nose at Miss Eveleigh ; but Ava had simply suspended her judgment, not thinking much of Farley's. She was fond of ' old Farley,' as everybody was in the habit of calling him, nevertheless, and would have done anything to please him but put herself into relations with ' underbred people ' ; and

her graciousness to Nell, which had by no means delighted the girl as she meant it to do, was caused by her pleasure in finding that she could afford to be civil to these new people without compromising her dignity.

CHAPTER XVI.

RALPH CURGENWEN.

IT was a figure of speech to call Farley, the farmer, an old man. He was very grey, and to Nell he seemed old ; but he was only in reality about fifty-five, and was as hearty and active, in spite of his weight and his breadth, as he had ever been in his life. Early in life he had taken up the theories and opinions on the subjects of the people and their masters, and the landlords and the tenants, it pleased him to hold forth upon now in his more advanced age ; but principally, perhaps, because of an affection for Ralph Curgenwen, which existed very strongly in his breast, and also, perhaps, because he was by nature




a peaceable, comfort-loving man, his theories, like Mr. Eveleigh's, had remained undeveloped by his practice. He objected to landlords in general, but he was foolishly partial to his own. Mr. Curgenwen was about fifteen years younger than Farley, and had wound himself round the heart of the elder man almost in his babyhood, when the present Farley was subject to a generation of Farleys which had now passed away. Ralph was a neglected boy, though ostensibly the heir of a good property. His mother died when he was a very little fellow, and he was happier at the Farleys' farm than in his own home ; and so it happened that he got into a habit of following young Farley about, and confiding in him all his small troubles, and consulting him in all his pursuits, which were mostly of an outdoor tendency, that had lasted through his childhood, his school days,

instilled his own very liberal notions into the boy's head. The early dependence of the boy on him for most of the happiness of his life at home had given him a sort of authority over Ralph, and a habit of speaking his mind upon all occasions which he never departed from, and at which Ralph had the good sense never to be offended, and which in Farley's own consciousness seemed a kind of set-off against the easy compromises he was quite aware that he very often made between his public and his private conscience for Ralph's sake. And Ralph, who had no strong opinions of his own, and who as he grew older was amused by Farley's, let him say his say on most subjects, and very often pretended to agree with him, and had brought

up his sister to consider Farley a privileged person, who was to be listened to respectfully and never contradicted. Ava obeyed readily, taking the strictures Farley chose to make on her own conduct from time to time with perfect good humour. She had never been a very great favourite of his, though her pleasant manner to himself and her fondness for her brother recommended her to him in some degree ; but he resented the difference old Mr. Curgenwen made in his treatment of Ralph and Ava. She was, it was true, a very lovely little girl, when Ralph, her half-brother, was a troublesome schoolboy, twelve years her senior ; and this might account for more petting being bestowed on the one than on the other, but not for the exclusive interest and attention the father gave to the girl to the utter neglect of the boy, who far more needed his care and watchfulness. Money Mr. Curgenwen never grudged, even to

Curgenwen was neither better nor worse as a boy than other boys, but he seemed to have the capacity for inspiring love. He was now as Farley had said a very popular man. He had a frank, outspoken manner, and a hearty laugh which went a long way with most people in establishing his reputation for general goodwill towards men. Farley believed himself to be entirely in his confidence, and if when he came to think of it he knew no very distinct facts about him, he set it down to the openness of the man's nature, and to his having nothing special to relate about himself. Nevertheless, there was one great fact in Ralph Curgenwen's later life that he had studiously concealed from his old friend. It could scarcely be called a secret,



for it was known to one or two people, but to so few as to be practically known to none. The family lawyer of the Curgenwens knew it, but at Miss Curgenwen's request had kept the information to himself, not very much against his own inclination, and the lawyer's confidential clerk knew it. The latter may or may not have mentioned it confidentially to a friend : the chances are that he had not done so, feeling no interest in the matter. The lawyer himself lived in London, and was thus not tempted to gossip in Liaston, which town was at all times deeply interested in the affairs of the only 'county' family living within visiting distance. The only 'county' family with a '*place*' it ought to be added, for there were few of the inhabitants of Liaston, of the resident gentry that is, who did not pride themselves on belonging to some well-known name in some distant county. Sometimes the claim was real,

any doubt were felt it was left unexpressed, for this being a received condition of entrance into Liaston society, and each fairly presentable new importation into it being too valuable to be lost, most people had only to assert the fact to find it taken for granted. The doubts and suspicions that had been felt about the Eveleighs had arisen entirely by their own fault in quietly ignoring the interest and kindness Liaston had been quite prepared to show in them. However, the Curgenwens' claim, not that they made one, was genuine enough, and Mr. Curgenwen was, as has been said, a very popular man in Liaston, where he spent a good deal of his time when he was at home. A bachelor, with a handsome face, a frank and apparently hearty manner, manly and energetic, the pos-

essor of a yacht, a good fortune, and a beautiful old place, is it wonderful that Mr. Curgenwen was interesting? Mr. Eveleigh's star, which had been in the ascendant since he came to Liaston, would now be paled by the gas-lamp of Mr. Curgenwen's brilliant position and charming *bonhomie*. And then they—the sighing maidens and widows of Liaston—knew so well what a great truth is the fact that a man who is good to his womenkind, his mother, and sisters, and so forth, is always an admirable husband. In this respect also Mr. Curgenwen was eligible. Could a brother be a better brother than he had been? Did he not take his sister everywhere with him? Was there not a special cabin all her own on his yacht? Had he not, though he was himself a sociable man, given in to her dislike to society, and allowed her to close Tremore, as far as real gaiety was concerned, com-

motives for pleasant behaviour. Nevertheless, the unknown fact about Mr. Curgenwen is not without its significance, and may as well now be revealed. Tremore belonged to Miss Curgenwen, and therefore Farley's real landlord was a lady who in her youth had been so impressed by the injustice done to her brother that she had preferred to ignore the fact completely up to the present time. Mr. Curgenwen was in reality possessed only of his yacht and a moderately comfortable income inherited from his mother. His sister was, as has already been said, his half-sister. Tremore was not entailed, and the last Curgenwen had hated his handsome, frank, pleasant-spoken son for no reason that he ever revealed either to the young man or

to any other human being. With just as strong a love as his hate for his son, he had loved his daughter. To her and to her children he bequeathed Tremore. Failing them it was to return to his son. The possibility of its ever returning to him had seemed to the old man out of the question. Ava Curgenwen was, when her father died, a perfectly healthy, very beautiful girl, of about sixteen or seventeen, and it was not in the least likely that even if she had had no beauty Miss Curgenwen of Tremore would remain unmarried. But some doubt of the justice of his bequest must have troubled his conscience, or a desire to let the unexpected blow fall with its full force on Ralph's hated head may have influenced him. However that may have been he mentioned to none but his lawyer his intentions. The lawyer was scandalised, and exceedingly sorry for the pleasant, popular Ralph; but the old man

girl, handed over her power and her income and the whole management of the property to her brother when she attained her majority. During the interval between her father's death and her twenty-first birthday Tremore was deserted, for Ralph was not her guardian. The old lawyer was alone appointed her guardian, with very restricted powers of doing anything for his favourite Ralph. In those early days Ava Curgenwen had been even ready for her brother's sake to make a vow against matrimony : she had at least offered to promise him that she would never marry. But Ralph had with much show of indignation refused to allow so young a girl to fetter herself by any such promise. Then she thought of a deed of

gift, but this the lawyer explained to her was foreseen and provided against by the terms of the will : she could neither give nor sell nor will away Tremore. To make up for this she refused to allow any rejoicings or gatherings or any sign of her coming of age to be made at Tremore. Ralph made a faint protest, but gave in in the end very gracefully. Altogether, the two people most interested, Ava and her guardian, were of opinion that Ralph had behaved very well in the matter after the first bitterness of his disappointment passed away ; but he brooded over it and over the possible reasons of his father's hatred, which sat lightly on him in the old man's lifetime, and had never inconvenienced him much, as he had his own very sufficient income. He ended by suspecting the reason of it all, but he never breathed his suspicions to any other human being. He had never intended in the beginning of his

to the world of their acquaintances of old Mr. Curgenwen's strange will might be complied with ; and he had salved his conscience by refusing to accept his sister's promise not to marry. But with his own awakening suspicions came a gradually growing and increasing dread of what the world would be likely to say if the truth were known. This it was that made his protest so faint against Ava's objection to her coming-of-age rejoicings : this it was that made him against his conscience gratefully accept his sister's tacit sacrifice of power and position. Gradually also he grew accustomed to his position. There were times when he absolutely forgot a fact of which Ava never reminded him ; but there were times also when the longing

for possession of what ought to have been his, but was not, grew stronger than his conscience. Tremore was his Naboth's vineyard, which Naboth was willing enough to sell to him, but could not. Ava *and her children* came between him and it ; and Ava, in spite of his refusal to accept her promise not to marry, in spite of her acknowledged beauty, in spite of her good worldly position, and the certainty that a Curgenwen could not possibly be penniless, was now nearly thirty, and had never, as far as she herself knew, had a single offer of marriage. Ralph, her brother, could have revealed a few remarkable facts to the contrary if he had chosen ; and Ralph's conscience (for he had one) was not easy on the subject. He specially disliked to think of certain false innuendoes that had escaped him, as if by absolute compulsion, and always under promise of secrecy respecting his sister, which he had always found successful in

not in her right mind. But it would not do. Ralph Curgenwen knew perfectly well that there was a doubt of his own raising in more than one manly bosom of her perfect sanity, which had tied the tongues that longed to speak of love to the beautiful Ava, and that no assurance of her own to the contrary would ever efface. He had hinted that 'the mother, you know—it is only fair to tell you,' &c., &c., more than once with an absolute security in the good faith of the man to whom he entrusted the secret, (whose love had in consequence of his hints to be smothered for ever,) that had as yet never been misplaced. Strangers, acquaintances, and friends wondered perpetually why Ava Curgenwen was unmarried; and Ava herself

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rather wondered too, and thought to herself that she need not have been in such a hurry when she was seventeen to promise that she would never marry. Curiously enough, her own heart had never been touched, and this Ralph knew, and so consoled himself for preventing any man trying to touch it, saying to himself that he had never stood between her and her real happiness. Ava never suspected him of anything but an over-anxiety about her when she found how little freedom he allowed her ; how absurdly prudish as she considered he was about never allowing her to go anywhere or be in any society without him ; how impossible it was for her to have five minutes' conversation with the most sensible of *mankind* without his interruption. It provoked her sometimes, for Ava Curgenwen, though a fairly generous woman, was no saintly, patient martyr, who, if she had had a love, would have sacrificed it to her brother

tive woman as I am too, who has never even had the ghost of a love affair!' she would say, with a little wistful, surprised look in her lovely eyes, which would call forth a chorus of incredulous contradictions and assurances that she might pretend as much as she liked, but she would get none of them to believe *that*. 'So beautiful as she was!'

And when she would persist it was true, and a few who knew her best would incline to think she *might* be speaking the truth, 'though nobody *ever* did on those matters!' the wonder and the indignation would increase till it became a perfect howl against the blindness of men. To Ralph himself she would say sometimes, 'You forget, Ralph, that I am growing old!'

‘No,’ he would reply ; ‘but I remember always that my sister is very beautiful!’ And Ava loved Ralph’s pleasant smile and tender compliments as the best thing her life possessed. Ralph, to do him justice, did love and always had loved his sister, and had, as his old lawyer friend considered, shown his good sense by treating her as entirely innocent and unoffending in the matter of the unjust will that deprived him of his rights. If the old man sometimes suspected more than Ava did how it was that Ralph was so careful of her, he only smiled to himself. As long as Ralph was as good and kind to his sister as he had every reason to believe him to be, and as long as he also remained unmarried, the old man was inclined to think they were just as likely to be happy together as if they were to take all the wearisome cares of matrimony upon themselves respectively. Ralph thought so too, though he

Tremore. They never had any visitors there except an occasional lady friend of Ava's. And the Liaston people he knew would never count with his sister, who was as proud in her manner and ways with them as he appeared to be the contrary, and so had not by any means attained to popularity amongst them. As for himself, he had not yet seen the woman for whom he would be willing to make a clean breast of it, and resign his false position to offer her himself, his yacht, and his very comfortable income. He might have bought a place for himself. He might have married an heiress with a place of her own. But his heart was fixed with a growing desire upon the old home of the Curgenwens, and no other place in the world would be the

same to him as Tremore. No wonder he was a good landlord, for he loved the place with a very strong love, and never grudged his own money on its improvement.

‘ You see, Ralph, how good it is for Tremore that you should act just as if it was yours. I could never afford by myself to improve it as you are doing,’ Ava would say when, as he sometimes did, he alluded to her rights. And speeches like this pleased him, and made him feel secure in the position he wounded his conscience to preserve.

CHAPTER XVII.

AVA'S BEAUTY.


NELL did not go straight home to report her meeting with Miss Curgenwen. Her visit to Farley having been cut short, and the day being fine, she wandered on through the landslip, thinking something of this new element that was coming into her life, and thinking of it also with a vague dislike. She had so hoped that this woman whom she was to be allowed to make friends with, if she chose, would be 'nice'; and she had no real reason to suppose her to be otherwise. Miss Curgenwen had been gracious and civil, and patronising. Perhaps it was this last quality in the tone of her conversation that

Nell had not liked ; but for some reason or other she felt afraid that they would not suit one another. She wondered why it was that she who had such an æsthetic delight in beauty, who had been charmed by old Mrs. Gray's into forgiving her 'airs and graces,' was left so cold by Miss Curgenwen's. There was nothing mean in the face either, to account for its want of attraction to Nell. It was the face of a woman who might have a generous heart for anything Nell knew. The girl had never thought much of her own style of beauty. It may indeed be said that she had seldom thought about it at all, or of its possible effect on others. She was generally too much occupied with other people, and what she thought of them, ever to wonder or care what they thought of her. Now even she was not at all concerning herself as to the impression she might have

to make an acquaintance in Liaston,' her brother had replied, when she told him that same evening to hold himself in readiness to call with her on the Eveleighs.

'She is such a beautiful girl, Ralph! and then she does not really belong to Liaston; indeed, from what Farley tells me, I fancy she and her old father hold themselves quite aloof from the society in the place. You will come, Ralph?'

'Better-looking than you, Ava?' asked her brother with complimentary incredulity. Ava went up to a glass, and looked at herself seriously, and not without satisfaction, before she answered. She saw a tall, slim, girlish figure, perfectly easy and graceful, and perfectly dressed. A small head of a strictly classical type, perfect features, perfect com-



plexion, without a line or wrinkle on it, and the whole set off by thick wavy soft hair of a pale gold colour, and large, widely-opened, surprised-looking, hazel eyes with dark lashes. The upper lip might be to non-lovers of the type a shade too short, and the downwards turn of the corners of the curved mouth too pronounced ; but the placid childish eyes took off from the proud expression of the lips. It was a very beautiful face. She smiled at it, and the smile was pretty too, but not bright, and rather cold ; and the eyes did not seem to respond to it.

‘ A different style, Ralph,’ she said, turning her head a little on one side, and looking, or trying to look, at her face sideways.

‘ And so you need not be jealous!’ he answered, laughing.

‘ Jealous!’ she repeated with fine scorn, making her lips into a perfect arch. ‘ Besides, she is only a child, Farley says, though

am years older! Twelve years older, to be strictly correct,' she added with a faint sigh.

Some memory made Ralph Curgenwen colour up as his sister turned her eyes on him. Was the vague wonder in them a wonder why the sweetness of a worthy human love had never even been offered to such beauty as hers, in all these years that had passed so placidly and uneventfully by, as to have made no mark of their passing on its perfection? But he put away the thought, and returned to their subject of conversation.

'As long as she is seventeen, it don't much matter what she looks ; "on a toujours l'âge qu'on a,"' he said, quoting the saying for Nell's benefit, and forgetting that it ap-

plied to his sister also. Ralph was fast approaching the age when a man of his stamp begins to think no woman, except it might be an exceptional woman like his sister, worthy of his attention unless she is very young. He felt a little pleasurable curiosity about this Miss Eveleigh whom Ava, who scorned the people of Liaston, had selected to honour by her notice, and whom he was quite unconscious of having seen for himself on this very day, as well as Ava ; and was by no means afraid of falling a victim to a sudden fancy for a pretty girl, even in the country. For Ralph Curgenwen thought he had such heart as he was possessed of well in hand by this time. It is doubtful if it had ever hitherto troubled him much ; and he had certainly never allowed it to interfere with his interests. He had some very decided likings and dislikings, which even under other circumstances might have disinclined

sister's company he could always have it ; when he did not want it he could trust her to obey his instructions, and live contented without him in the society of women. A wife might have felt herself neglected if, as had happened to Ava, she had been left alone, or with one woman friend, for weeks at Tremore, while Ralph took a holiday and indemnified himself for his watchful guardianship during the London season. But as a matter of fact it was the feeling that her society was not forced on him that made Ralph Curgenven so seldom wish to go anywhere without Ava, and it was only once in two or three years that he had gone off in his yacht without her ; and not unfrequently it had been at her own request that he had done so.

Still it was pleasant to him to feel that if he chose he was free to go anywhere without encumbrances. And over and above these natural feelings there was always the unpleasant necessity of declaring himself as Curgenwen *not* of Tremore in the event of his marriage. Therefore he had invariably carefully stopped his numerous flirtations in time to prevent his compromising his liberty of action. He had gained the reputation, a very convenient one for a man who does not intend to marry, of a harmless flirt ; and was in this way able to amuse himself without detriment.

‘Of course, if you choose to make yourself ridiculous by a flirtation with Ralph Curgenwen, who everybody knows never means anything, it is your own fault,’ was all the comfort his young lady friends who fancied themselves in love with him received from their young lady confidants when they


would flit away to another, but would never quarrel with the forsaken one, and would willingly return to her when the disappointment was forgiven. In this way he had a dozen or two of old friends who smiled at him not ungraciously if a little sarcastically, and who laughed with and at each other for the charm that he still possessed for them, and who had one and all found it impossible to retain a serious feeling for him. It would have puzzled them, probably, to say in what the charm they succumbed to consisted. He was handsome, some said; he was not at all handsome, others said. Men never thought him good-looking, but, as a rule, they liked him. Mr. Curgenwen was, as everybody said, singularly unlike his sister. She was

fair, and he was dark. She looked proud, and placid, and even-tempered; he looked passionate, and easy to offend. And he also, at times, looked rather wicked—capable, that is, in spite of his frank manner and pleasant laugh, of a great crime. This, Ava was used to say, was the consequence of his having a long turned-down nose and gleaming black eyes, and was a great misfortune to Ralph. And certainly no man up to this point in his existence was ever more belied by his face than he was. The melancholy nose and passionate eyes belonged to a man whose temper was very nearly perfect, and who had no strong feeling of any sort except for Tremore and his personal comforts. The smile that made him so popular, and that brightened up all his face by disclosing his faultless white teeth, and softening the gleam of his black eyes, and was so frank and kindly, was as meaningless of open-heartedness as the smile

was possessed of a well-defined hatred for the Scotch would in all probability have set forth as a type of Scotch character as he would understand the surface of it. He was cold, rather hard, without passion, incapable of a great crime, but quite capable of small meanesses ; keeping his own counsel and a sharp look-out for his own interest ; not an unkindly man, and very desirous of the good opinion of his fellows, because of a vein of vanity that ran through his character ; a good man of business, with a certain air of authority that made him a good master ; good to his sister, partly because it was his interest to be so, but also because she was *his* sister—a part of his possessions, as it were ; and his was a nature that inclined to magnify the value of anything that was his own. And it is not to

be supposed that Ralph Curgenwen had absolutely *no* heart. On the contrary, it beat with the steady, lasting, mild affection for the few people he really cared for, that is supposed by the above-mentioned Englishman to be the only sort of love the Scotch heart is capable of. But if Ava had died, or if old Farley had died, Ralph would not have been a much sadder man, nor would he long or deeply have felt a sense of loss of something in his life that his life could never hold again. Ava and Farley would have missed Ralph infinitely more than he would have missed them ; and Ralph's servant would have missed him and mourned him, and the men belonging to his yacht would have deeply regretted him. Ralph had never been a ne'er-do-well ; he had never been extravagant ; he had never been a particular trouble to anybody ; he had *broken* no hearts, if he had given a little passing mortification to a few ; and yet

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stowed on him. In what this subtle charm consists which causes hearts to turn so often away from the excellent of the earth to the far less worthy possessors of it, who shall say? It takes a thousand forms, and no man or woman possessed of it seems to bear the faintest resemblance to another. And yet it *appears* to depend upon some small external attraction in most cases—a trick of manner, an irresistible smile, a soft voice. Perhaps it was this last that was Ralph Curgenwen's charm. He was not musical; he cared for music not at all, and had never even tried to sing. But his voice was soft, and full, and mellow, with the tone of a stopped diapason organ pipe in it. Possibly the youthful look for which the Curgenwens were remarkable, may have added to the



charm; for Ralph was a younger-looking man, to a casual observer, than Angus Gray the coast-guard, though he was at least ten years his senior. Farley had mentioned his landlord's age in speaking of him, and naturally Nell Eveleigh at seventeen had imagined that a man who was only fifteen years younger than 'old' Farley was, as she had described him to her father, an old bachelor. Mr. Eveleigh's dismay at the sight of the 'old bachelor' when he presented himself at the cottage with his sister may be imagined. In the meantime it was given to Nell to behold him, herself unseen, on the same day that she had met his sister, by a very simple accident; and to Ralph to see Nell, but not in his case by accident.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CHANCE MEETING.

NELL had been attracted by some berries and leaves that were taking on their brilliant autumn flush of decay, and had scrambled after them a little off the main path through the valley which she had taken when she left the farm, when a cheerful whistle arrested her attention. Turning carelessly to look at the chance passer-by, she saw Ralph very distinctly, and idly wondered who he was for a moment before she turned again to secure the berries. He might have noticed her if he had not been looking straight before him, and thinking of other things. He passed round a corner of rock out of her sight, and


then his eyes and mind became fully occupied by a man who was coming towards him at some little distance off, and whom he did not recognise at all. Mr. Curgenwen, in his character of popular landlord and great man of Liaston, was in the habit of taking notice of all classes of people, but he had never happened to come across Gray before. The latter had, it may be remembered, not been more than a year at Liaston, and for the last six months Tremore had been vacant, Ralph and Ava having been an unusually long time about in the yacht. Otherwise the very fact of Ralph's being the possessor of a yacht which lay not unfrequently in the harbour at Liaston would have made it unlikely that he should have overlooked such a man as Angus Gray, of whom his mates were now so proud. Gray was, when Mr. Curgenwen caught sight of him, bound for nowhere in particular, and was not employed on any duty con-

might meet the girl to whom he had foolishly given it. It was nearly a fortnight since he had had the chance conversation with her by her favourite rock in the landslip, and he was hungering for a sight of her. When she had given him leave to find her again by the rock if he cared to do so, 'or to come to the cottage,' he had then promised himself that he would speedily avail himself of the permission. But since that time he had reconsidered the matter. The more innocent and careless she was, the less she understood the misconstructions that might be put on this unequal friendship, the more it behoved him, who did know what evil tongues might say, to protect her from her own youthful imprudence and temerity. That Nell Eveleigh was a girl whose nature would incline her to

care absolutely nothing for the world's opinion of her if her own conscience justified her, and that she was also a girl whose perfect integrity of purpose it would be difficult for an human being who looked into her honest, proud young face to doubt, only made it all the more imperative on him to see that no shadow should fall on her fair fame through her kindness to him, or cause any mortal man or woman to look in her face for the refutation of the faintest doubt of her. Therefore he had made no positive attempt to see her, hoping that accidentally and naturally he might be so fortunate as to encounter her, or that she might come again to see his mother. But chance had not favoured him. Nell was occupied by her father, and had had no time allowed her to wonder what had become of Gray. She had never been near the rock since he had seen her there, as in all her walks abroad she had been accompanied by her father.

But Angus's whole heart was filled with longing to see her, and he could stand it no longer. He would not go near the rock ; he would not go near the cottage. But the path through the landslip was open to all the world ; and often he had to traverse it on his night duty. There he had a chance at least of seeing Nell, and doubtless if she saw him she would speak to him. He had seen no one in the least like her, and had not an idea that she was near him when he met Ralph Curgenwen.

Whether or no Ralph had ever noticed him before, Angus had made no special impression on him till this day, when he saw him coming along the path before him. Angus himself knew Mr. Curgenwen perfectly well by sight, and also all about him that



everybody else knew. When they met in the path Angus stepped aside to let him pass more easily, touching his cap respectfully, but with the grave dignity peculiar to him which did not invite a familiar accost. Accordingly Ralph found himself returning the man's civility without speaking, and passing on for a moment. But the master of Tremore was not easily daunted, and was possessed of a curiosity quite *feminine*, to quote a familiar and vulgar error which falsely supposes curiosity to be more strongly developed in women than in men. He stopped, looked after Angus Gray, who was proceeding on his way, and would very soon have come up to the spot where Nell had diverged from the path.

‘Hey!’ he called loudly.

Angus turned and looked back, and Mr. Curgenwen beckoned to him.

Accordingly he retraced his steps.

‘No, sir, to Liaston,’ responded Angus not very encouragingly. He was hoping to meet Miss Eveleigh, and was in haste to go on.

‘Don’t know me, perhaps?’ said Ralph.

‘Yes, sir, Mr. Curgenwen of Tremore,’ answered Angus.

‘Ah! a case of more people knowing Tom Fool, eh, than Tom Fool, you know &c., &c. Heard that before, my man, I dare say,’ said Ralph laughing pleasantly, and thinking any old joke good enough for the country. He had a habit of making bad jokes with his inferiors, which as a rule they rather appreciated when his soft voice spoke them, and his pleasant cheery laugh followed them.

Angus Gray only looked at him with a

momentary wonder whether he *was* a fool, which quickly passed away as the keen curious black eyes met his own; and he made no reply.

‘Tell me your name that I may know you again?’ said Ralph, preparing to move, and a little mortified to see that he had failed to make his usual favourable impression upon the man.

‘Angus Gray,’ was the reply in not too gracious a tone of voice, accompanied by a movement of impatience to proceed.

‘Well, good-day. I won’t keep you. On duty to Culve, I suppose?’ said Ralph, really supposing it, when to his astonishment the man looked him straight in the face with a sudden flash in his eyes as if he should like to knock him down. Poor Angus’ conscience caused him thus to flush and fire up at the innocent question; but his honesty caused him to answer it, though his voice

away with an unreasonable dislike to Mr. Curgenwen of Tremore rising up in his heart.

Ralph stood and looked after him till he had turned the corner of the path, hesitated a moment, and then struggled up a rocky mound on the left from where he could see the path again, muttering to himself by way of excuse that the man was after no good. If Gray had turned he might have seen Mr. Curgenwen watching, and might have had some cause for anger if he had seen the smile of satisfied curiosity which lighted up Ralph's dark face as he saw the coast-guard suddenly come to a halt and lift his cap to a female form that emerged into the pathway from amongst the rocks and bram-

bles on the same side as that on which was the rocky elevation Ralph was standing on, so that he could not see her face, though he was near enough for the observation that the young woman was what he should have mistaken for a young lady. He was so amused with his little discovery that he stood watching them, forgetting that they might turn and see him. But this they did not do. They stood a moment in the pathway, and then went on in the opposite direction from that in which Ralph was going. Decidedly the girl was a lady, thought Mr. Curgenwen with a shrug of his shoulders, still watching the two ; but it was no business of his ; and then what a very uncommon-looking person was the man he had just met, and who had not been too civil to him ! Ralph descended from his watch with a good-natured smile on his face, and no sort of animosity against the man who had only been in haste to meet his

he went on his way to meet his sister at Farley's farm, not thinking much more of the matter. It never occurred to him to associate the young lady who had met, or at least appeared to meet, the coast-guard with the uncommon name in the landslip, with the Miss Eveleigh his sister asked him that evening to call on with her. And he never noticed a certain anxious expression that came over Farley's face as he mentioned Gray as 'such a fine-looking fellow' whom he had met on his way to the farm.

'Did ye meet anybody forbye Gray, Mr. Ralph?' Farley asked with apparent unconcern. And Ralph's code of morality being to be always good-natured when it cost him nothing, said promptly,

‘Nobody else ;’ with a glance at Miss Bess Farley who had returned from the town, and was holding forth on the subject of the extra maid to Miss Curgenwen. Farley did not see the glance of caution at the gossiping ‘Bess,’ as he studiously avoided Ralph’s eye when he asked the question ; and he sighed with relief, for he had accompanied Nell to the gate, and had seen that she went on-wards instead of going home.

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